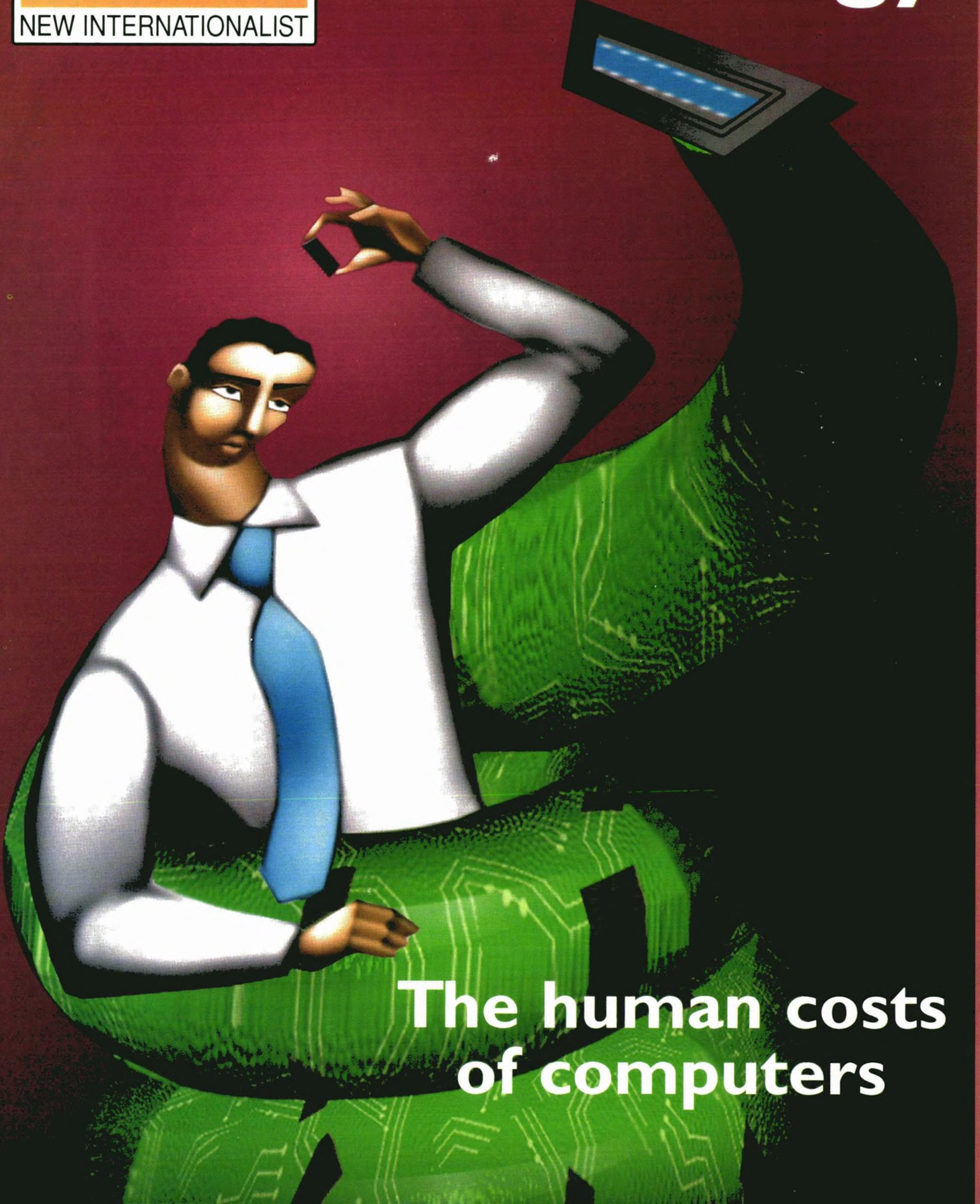
No. 286 / DECEMBER 1996

THE NI
NEW INTERNATIONALIST

Seduced by Technology



The human costs of computers

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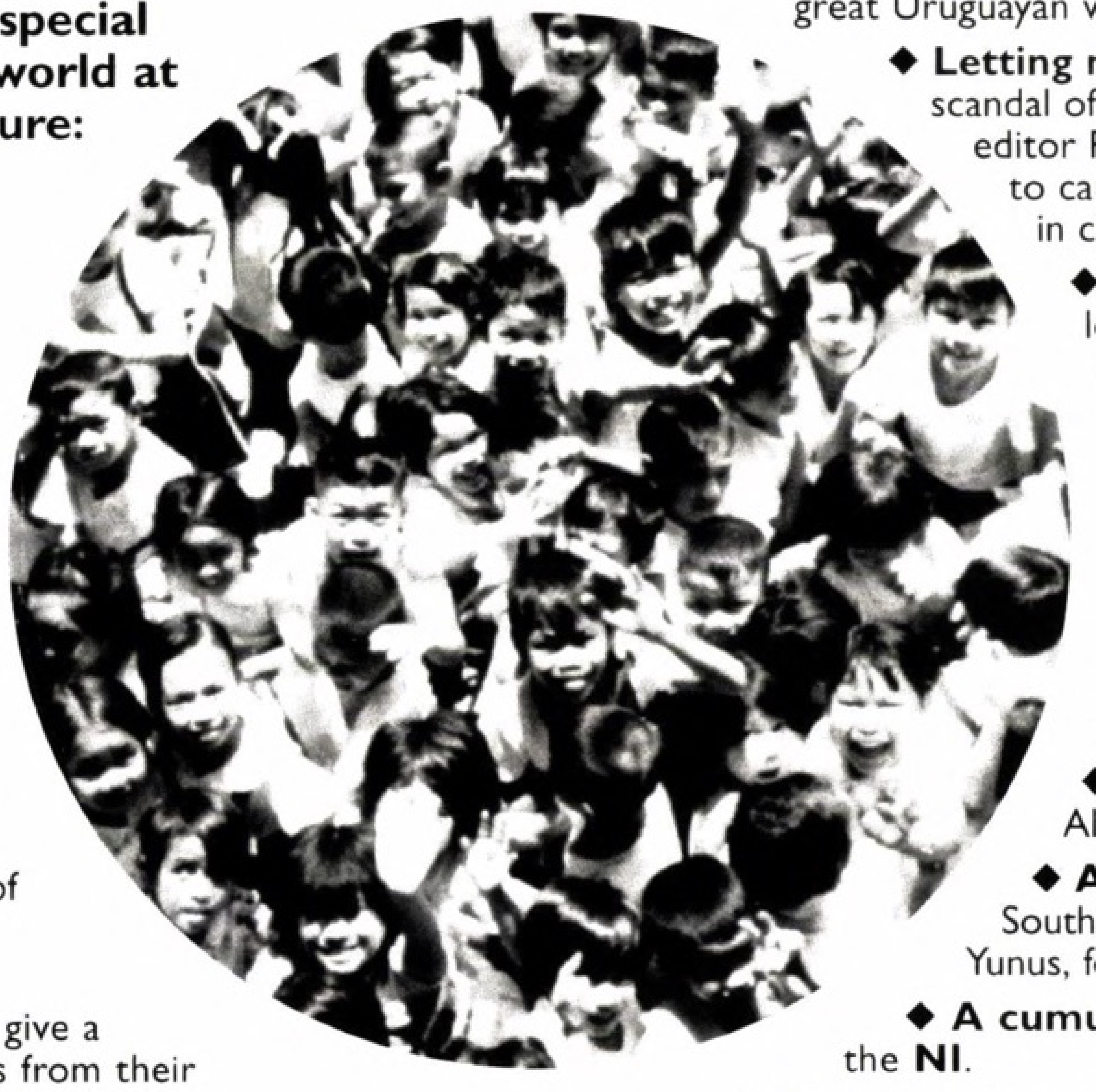
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◆ **Justice postponed** Is the world getting better or worse at delivering the basic needs of the human family?

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◆ **The other 1996** The key events of the year as seen from the South – double the normal length with background briefings to some of the main news stories.

◆ **Letters from the heart** *New Internationalist* correspondents give a personal slant on the state of things from their corner of the world.

◆ **After the Terror** Fragments from a world out of joint by the great Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano.

◆ **Letting mothers die** A passionate exposé of the scandal of maternal mortality by the **NI**'s founding editor Peter Adamson. Why does no-one seem to care about the tragedy of mothers who die in childbirth?

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◆ **Adjust the adjusters** The BBC's Mark Whitaker reports on the damage being done to Mozambique by the IMF.

◆ **Activist success** – profiles of the Alternative Nobel Prize winners for 1996.

◆ **A special NI Interview** with one of the South's key anti-poverty activists – Mohammed Yunus, founder of the Grameen Bank.

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The New Internationalist exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless in both rich and poor nations; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary within and between those nations if the basic material and spiritual needs of all are to be met; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for world development.

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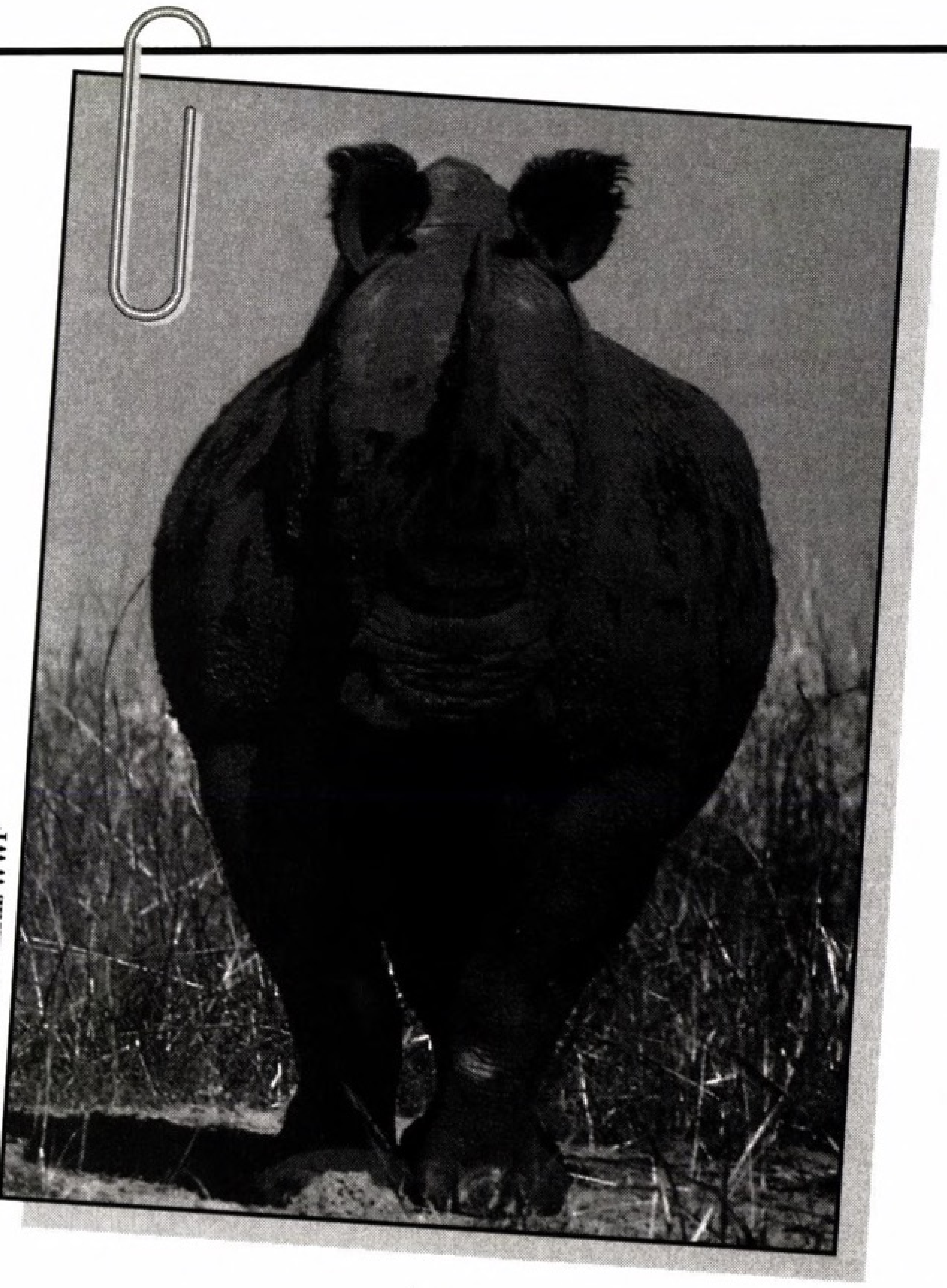

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Adoption Papers

Name: Notch

Age: 20

Sex: Male

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The trouble is, Garamba also harbours a deadly threat that could bring Notch's life to a brutal end at any time. The threat of poaching. Already this year, two rhinos have been shot and butchered, bringing the number of survivors to just 30.

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FRONT COVER: COMPUTER GENERATED ILLUSTRATION BY **PETER LACALAMITA/3 IN A BOX.**
MAGAZINE DESIGNED BY **ANDREW KOKOTKA**.

THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

New technology

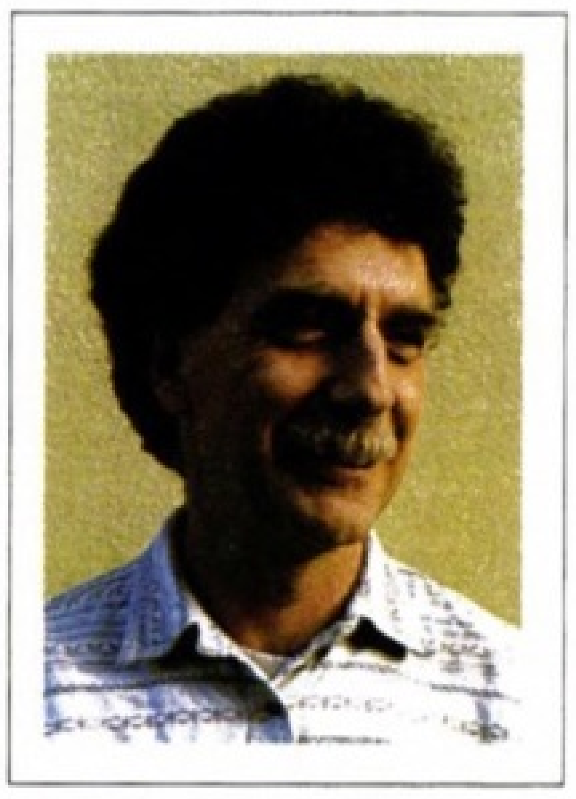
FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

WHEN I started working for **NI** more years ago than I can believe, the computer revolution was in its infancy. We banged out our articles on a variety of manual and electric typewriters, a trusty bottle of white-out always at the ready.

The design studio across the hall was where the raw copy became a finished magazine. The typed (and occasionally hand-written) material was first coded for point size, leading and measure, then sent out to be typeset. A few days later it came back in spiralling rolls of neat columns.

Next, the typeset text was sliced into a variety of lengths to fit the rough page design, coated with hot wax on the back and burnished into place on the page grids. All headlines were meticulously hand done from sheets of Letraset, letter by letter. It took about a month for one editor working with the designers to put together each issue.

That era has now faded and would seem as quaintly archaic to most young graphic designers today as a steam engine. I can be as nostalgic as anyone about the past but I'm not sorry about those changes. Nor, as far as I know, are our designers. Instead of drafting tables, parallel rulers and scalpels they work with scanners, Macintosh computers, a keyboard and a mouse. And they can do all kinds of nifty things on the page which would have been impossible even five years ago. Photos can be manipulated and text shaped effortlessly, charts and graphs knocked off in a jiffy, colours and tints from an infinite palette tested in a flash.



The magazine 'looks' better than ever. And the editing is probably tighter too. However, the curious thing is that it still takes about a month for one editor working with the designers to put together each issue.

Progress? Well, maybe. But it's that kind of irony that got me thinking about producing this issue on the computer revolution. What I didn't expect was the critical flak I got from my fellow editors, all of whom spend a good portion of their working day hunched in front of a computer monitor.

It was a bit like I was advocating a return to the horse and buggy. 'You can't possibly argue that we should get rid of computers,' said one. 'Surely the point is to make the best use of them.' I guess it was the faint whiff of defensive self-interest that confirmed for me that I was on to something. And eventually I half-convinced my colleagues too. Incidentally, since researching this issue I've repeatedly run into the assumption that people who question the basic technologies which underpin our society are either loonies or Luddites – or both. I still think it's more complicated than that. You're invited to read on and find out why.

Wayne Ellwood

Wayne Ellwood
for the ***New Internationalist*** *Co-operative*

PS You'll have longer to digest this issue than normal. In place of a regular January magazine we're producing a special bumper January/February issue which subscribers will receive in late January or early February depending on where you are in the world.

Letters

The New Internationalist welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address and e-mail are inside the front cover.

Suppression

Having been concerned with the subject for almost 60 years, my warm congratulations to you on the excellent issue on ***Energy*** (**NI 284**) may have some weight.

THE NI
NEW INTERNATIONALIST
Sun, wind, water, earth, air...
The energy revolution

There is however one point I should like to be more strongly brought out. This concerns the use of coppiced wood as a fuel source which is fully renewable and does not put fossil carbon into the atmosphere. In Africa agroforestry (alley cropping), where trees are planted on ten per cent of the crop-land, is proving the most hopeful system for growing food and firewood in a permanently sustainable way. In England coppicing is being reintroduced for fuel, while in Brazil a power station is being run on chips from the large area of specially planted coppicing trees.

Prof. MW Tring,
POWERAID, Brundish, England

Sustainable Fair

Much as I enjoyed your issue on ***Energy*** (**NI 284**) I was horrified to see that there was no mention at all of the most significant event ever yet to be held for the 'Clean Power' industry.

It has not been easy to get the Renewable Energy Industry motivated and represented in the way that it needs in order to compete with conventional power industries that are well established and organized. This is why the World Sustainable Energy Trade Fair, to be held in May next year in Amsterdam, Holland, is so important. For further information contact the fair's organizers in Britain on the 6th Floor, 22-26 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TJ.

Paul Diamond
London, England

Political lake

I would like to correct the misprint in the 'Update' section (**NI 284**) which stated that the hydroelectric project at Lake Yamdrok Tso in Tibet threatens to drain the lake in 500 years. It is actually only 50 years according to an Austrian contractor. It may be even faster than this. The plan to pump water from the heavily-silted Tsangpo river back into the lake to replenish the water drained to produce the electricity will disturb the pristine ecosystem and could destroy it within a year. There have been a number of major setbacks but the Chinese will not abandon the project because of its political importance in exploiting minerals and natural resources in Tibet and providing jobs for the growing influx of Chinese. Anyone who wishes to find out more can contact me at the Free Tibet Campaign, 9 Islington Green, London N1 2XH (e-mail tibetsupport@gn.apc.org)

Lorne Stockman,
FREE TIBET CAMPAIGN
London, England

Eco-refugees

Thanks for the issue on refugees (***Field of Dreams*** **NI 283**). I would like to mention another kind of refugee – eco-refugees.

India is rich in the biodiversity of its flora and fauna. But while preserving wildlife it is often forgotten that more than 50 per cent of India's parks and sanctuaries have human habitations. Over four million people live inside their core area. The situation for these people is becoming dismal. People are being forcibly evicted, creating a large number of eco-refugees.

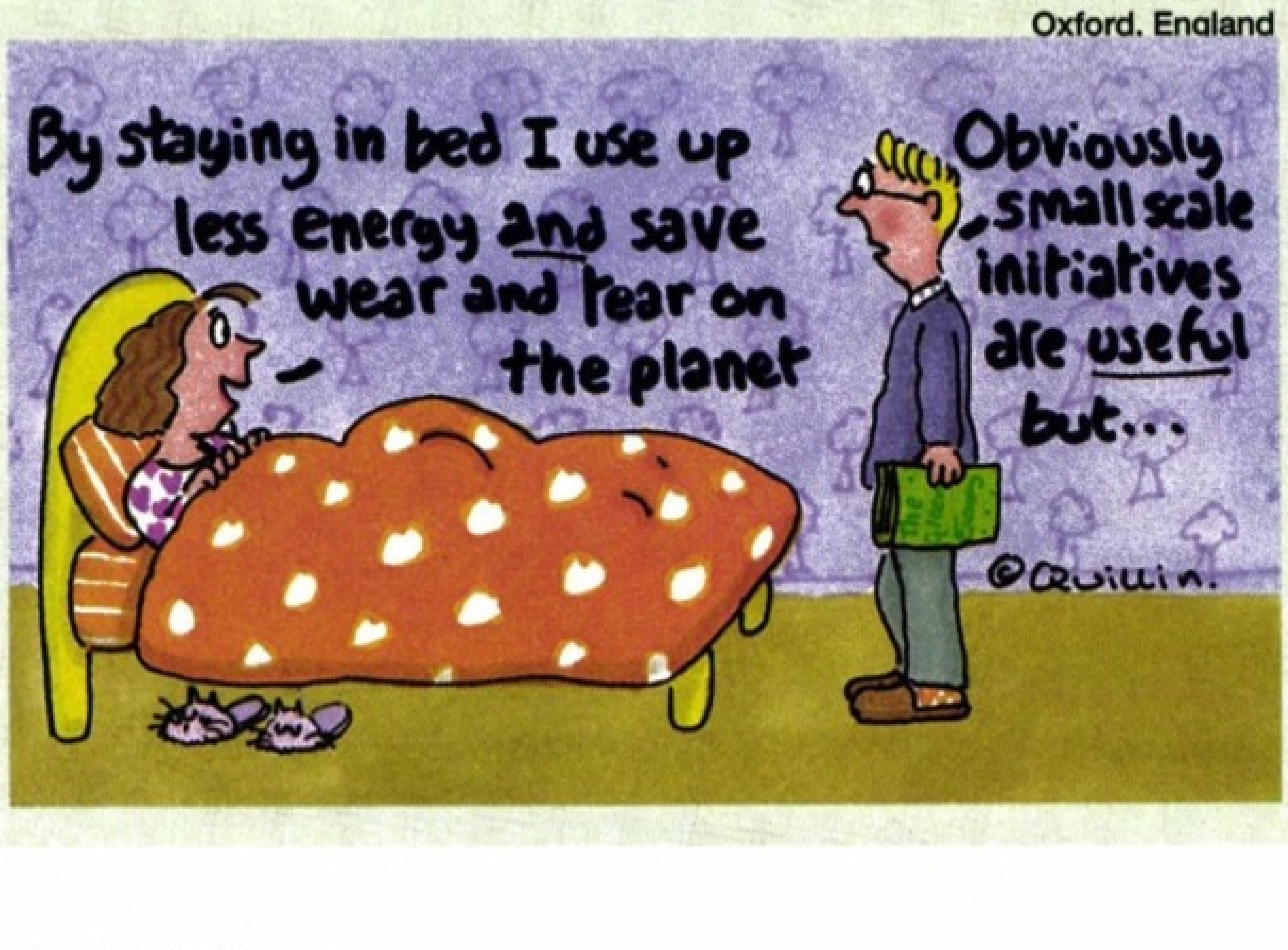
Suresh Diwan
Hosmangabad, India

Here to there

Your issue on ***Green Economics*** (**NI 278**) relied too heavily on North American perspective and there was a lot of emphasis on small-scale initiatives – useful but not in themselves challenges or real alternatives to the global scale of the problem.

I would like to have seen more on 'getting from here to there'. Only James Robertson made a serious contribution to this. Michael Jacobs' best-selling book *The Green Economy* sets out a lot of that groundwork for an advanced Western economy; I would commend it to readers who want to explore the issue further.

Martin Stott
Oxford, England


By staying in bed I use up less energy and save wear and tear on the planet
Obviously small scale initiatives are useful but...
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Internal report

Congratulations on your issue on the refugee settlement (***Field of Dreams*** **NI 283**). I would like to point out that the diagrams of the daily routines for Kakwa, Pujulu and Kuku women and men (page 17) were from a 1995 internal Oxfam report: *The Community Development Programme in the Ikafe Sudanese Refugee Settlement, Aringa County, Northern Uganda* prepared by Allyson Thirkell.

Robert Cornford
Publishing Manager, Oxfam, England

Choosing religion

Len Clarke, in writing off Genesis, Christianity and by implication all religion (***'Letters'*** **NI 283**) scores the 'own goal' that many non-religious people do. He obviously considers some things 'wrong' and cares about the victims of such wrong-doing. Why? And why should I feel the same way? If there is no God who cares about us and about evil, then it is only his opinion in a void that calls him to care.

Genesis and our biology and natural history (I am a science student and a Christian) are indeed contradictory. However, he should be wary of discounting the personal evidence of his love for humanity and justice before accepting science's best guess metaphysically. (As a mathematician too I know that an estimate of a curve may fit the seen points but vary wildly in its extrapolations).

I made the choice and chose Christianity. Those who do not believe in God do not believe in nothing. They believe in anything.

Tim Viles
Cambridge, England

Alcohol and crime

I was surprised and a little saddened by your issue on ***Criminal Justice*** (**NI 282**). It totally by-passed a major factor in crime: alcohol.

Nils Christie stated that 'the most dangerous place for your life is in your home'. He failed to mention the glaring fact that when most of these tragedies do occur, the accused person is usually in a state of acute alcohol intoxication.

Statistics show that in 70 – 80 per cent of all homicides and other violent crimes, the offenders had been drinking heavily. I find it incredible that these facts can be ignored when looking at crime.

Dr Sheila Cunningham
Liverpool, England

Class concepts

In your issue on ***Class*** (**NI 281**) you failed to discuss two major competing concepts.

Marxists consider class to be primarily an economic matter: classes are groups of individuals that relate to processes of production (of goods and services) and reproduction (of people, ideologies and behaviours) in similar ways. The control and ownership of these processes are therefore of paramount importance.

But the majority of social scientists and the media in rich countries deal with classes in terms of categories based on a composite index of occupation, level of income, education and choice of residence. Hence the widespread use of the term 'social classes'.

Such analyses remind us that many aspects of class behaviour are driven by non-economic considerations; that the Marxist division into bourgeoisie and proletariat is often too broad to provide us with an understanding of real situations.

But these 'social classes' analyses pretend that there are no tensions or conflicts between classes, as if classes are unrelated items on separate shelves. They cannot provide an explanation for the changing aspects of class relations such as why some groups are getting richer while others are getting poorer. Here Marxian concepts of economic processes provide clear guidance.

Combining the best aspects of both analyses helps to make the connection between enrichment and impoverishment that can then lead to action.

Mathew Zachariah
Calgary, Canada

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the New Internationalist.

LETTER FROM **INGUSHETIA**

An atheist of happiness

Olivia Ward has a drink with a man caught between two worlds.

'I am a little drunk,' said Malgobek rather unnecessarily. 'It really is a crime, but it's part of being Russian.'

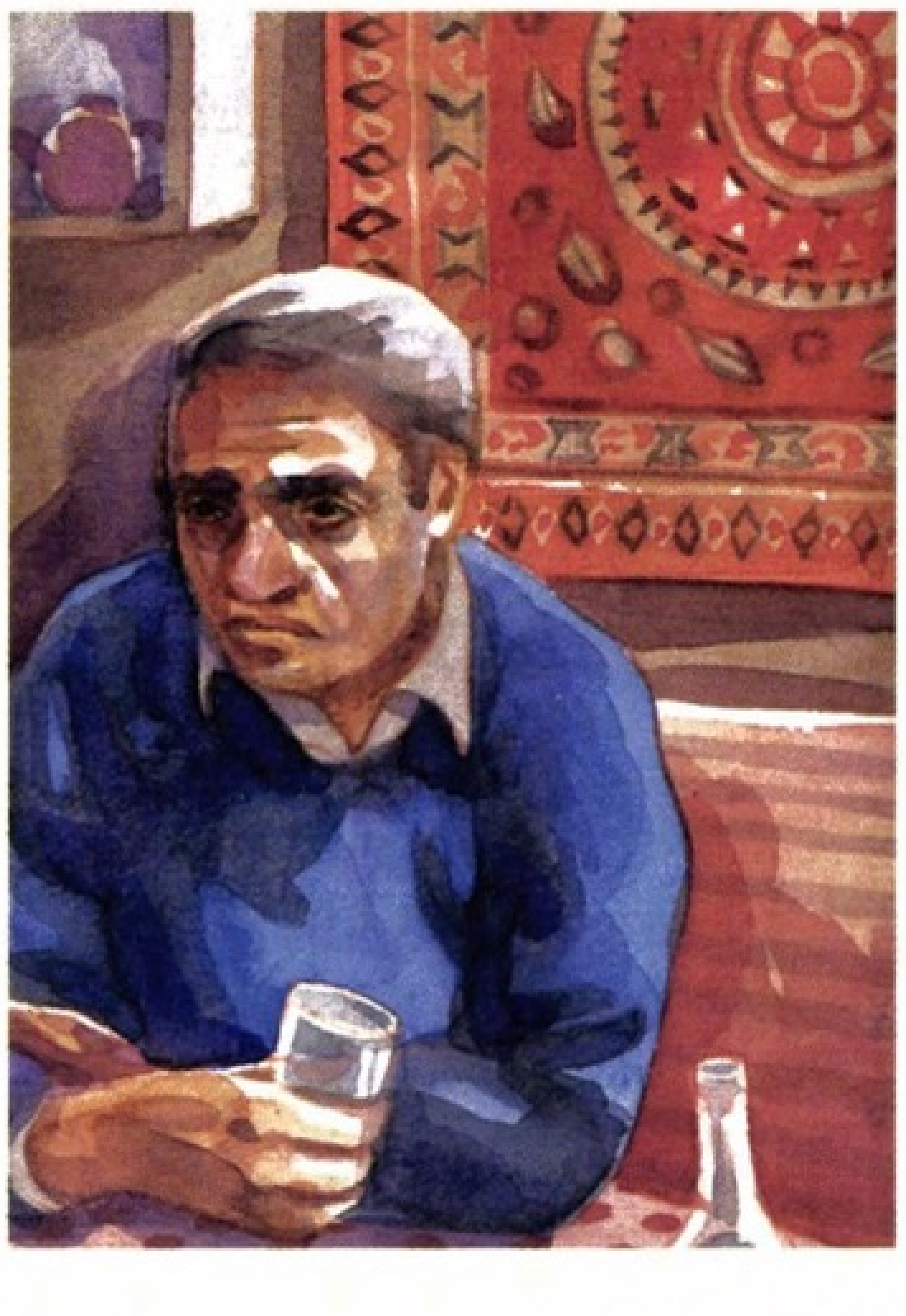
In Nazran, less than an hour from the battered frontiers of Chechnya, it was startling to hear any Caucasian, even a tipsy one, boast of his Russian-ness. That was especially true for the Ingush, the people of Ingushetia, who have been attacked along their own borders in the spillover of Russia's war to reclaim the separatist republic of Chechnya.

But Malgobek, on his fourth glass of vodka, was on a trip back to his roots, as a child born in exile who had to hide his identity to survive.

'My brother is still in Russia, in Magadan, like a lifer in the old gulag,' he said with a smile. 'Can you imagine someone embracing his imprisonment?'

Not waiting for an answer, he added, 'Yes, because he is not just an Ingush, not just a Caucasian, but a Russian.'

In 1944, in a carefully planned assault, Stalin ordered his military to round up and deport the entire population of the tiny Chechen-Ingush republic, a Muslim region of less than one million people.



SARAH JOHN

The excuse was a flimsy charge of collaboration with the Nazis who were trying to penetrate the strategically-placed Caucasus. Like other 'troublesome' groups they were branded traitors and moved far away from their homeland, with explosive consequences decades later.

Malgobek's family didn't perish from the disease or starvation that killed up to half the deportees in transit. But their final destination, Magadan, was a permanent vision of hell in the farthest eastern reaches of Russia, where the main road was built over the bones of the workers who had died constructing it.

In this sprawling prison camp Malgobek grew up, his own language and culture repressed, gleaning an education from books that told him Russia was the centre of the world.

'And the worst of it,' he said, shakily pouring another vodka, 'is that I still believe it.'

Marxist and Leninist tracts didn't interest him. But the work of Russia's splendid novelists and poets – some of them also repressed – struck a chord. The magical lines of Pushkin, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, haunted him. While working on construction gangs he read far into the night.

'When I read Pushkin,' he said, 'I saw my own struggle as an individual alone in a stifled society.'

But Malgobek was absorbing new cultures, even as he moved away from his own. The moderate Islam of the Caucasus left little mark on him. A nominal Muslim without a mosque or a prayerbook, he found it easy to drink and carouse with the Russians he worked alongside. He also learned the history and customs of the far eastern minorities in the Madagan, and of the Jews exiled in Stalin's prisons.

'I'm the perfect Russian,' he laughed. 'I mean, more Russian than the Russians themselves. They talk about one homogeneous nation, but it's a melting pot that never melts. I am all cultures, all religions in one person.'

But when the time came, returning to the amalgamated Chechen-Ingush republic brought no peace of mind. In 1992 a small brutal war broke out between the neighbouring North Ossetians and the Ingush trying to reclaim their old homes from them. Russia's part in the violent suppression of the conflict reminded him that Moscow was not to be trusted.

Two years later despair arrived in the form of the war in Chechnya. Malgobek's apartment in Grozny was destroyed by bombs, his precious library atomized, his friends killed and his wife and child turned into refugees.

'I don't know what to do,' he said, head in hands. 'I can't tear Russia out of my heart, and I can't drain the Ingush blood out of my body. I used to think I was everything, now I think I'm nothing. For me to hate the Russians is to hate myself.'

Looking at me with moist eyes, he added, 'I am so glad we can talk like this, because only a foreigner can look at this kind of dilemma and understand it with detachment.'

Without even a shot of vodka my head began to ache. The bitter irony of his situation, the lifelong sentence he had been handed – by what? Empire, colonialism, lust for power? – was too immense to contemplate.

'I used to think I was a New Man able to lead the way into a new world,' he said. 'Now I know Pushkin was right: I am an atheist of happiness. I do not believe in it.'

Olivia Ward is bureau chief for the *Toronto Star* in Moscow.

Update

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

The flowers of the earth

Argentine Indians win land-claim dispute

'From the hearts of the people' – protesters at the Pilcomayo River Bridge.

HORACIO PAONE

A SIT-IN by Argentine Indians has finally won them their long-promised land rights. The Wichi, Toba and Chorote Indians have lived in the Chaco area of northern Argentina for centuries. But for nearly 100 years they have suffered the takeover of their land by farmers and ranchers. Their fertile grasslands have been turned into scrub and semi-desert due to overgrazing, and recently national and international companies have begun building roads and bridges on the Chaco. As they arrived, settlers laid claim to the land and lobbied the Government to recognize their land rights. But the indigenous people's claim to the land was never recognized.

Finally, in 1993, Indian community leaders went to see Argentine President Carlos Menem. He received them warmly and listened to their claims. The Government agreed in principle to grant them the deeds to their land. But delay followed delay and the legal process ground to a halt.

The Indian community became increasingly frustrated as their letters and visits were ignored.

'We are not little animals that run around loose,' said community leader Humberto Diaz. 'We are not dogs that are chased away when their owner comes to sit by the fire. We are the flowers of the earth that God alone has planted to live and grow in these parts.'

At last, in September of this year, Hilario Dixon and Francisco Perez, leading members of the Indian community association, Lhaka Honhat, decided to try to mobilize the 35 communities in their area against the ongoing misuse of their lands. Together with 1,000 fellow Indians, they halted the construction of a partly-built bridge linking Argentina and Paraguay by occupying the site for more than three weeks.

'We have suffered the cold and the heat, the wind and the dust,' said Humberto Diaz. 'We have endured all this because our claim springs from the land itself and from the hearts of the people.'

After 23 days, Indian leaders met with officials from the provincial government and signed an agreement. This guarantees legal transfer of 600,000 hectares of land to Indians in the Chaco area of Northern Argentina. 'For years now in the Salta Province they have not wanted to listen to our voice, and the Government hasn't given our claim the importance it deserves,' said Dixon and Perez. 'But now we have succeeded in making our voice heard in the whole country and overseas.' A portion of the 600,000 hectares of land under consideration will also be given to recent settlers.

On signing the agreement the Indians ended their demonstration and agreed to allow the construction of the bridge to continue. But plans to build a new town around the bridge have been dropped until they have been consulted. Importantly, the agreement promises to respond to their demands for environmental restoration. They have highlighted reforestation, recovery of the soil, and control over the use of natural resources as essential elements of their land claim. ■

Ingrid Hanson, Tear Fund

Burma success

The Burma Action Group have awarded British Home Stores (BHS) their 'Unethical Business of the Year' certificate and launched a country-wide consumer boycott of BHS because it continues to import from Burma, a country ruled by one of the most repressive military regimes in the world. A long list of high-street names including Levi's, Liz Claiborne, Reebok, Eddie Bauer, OshKosh B'Gosh and London Fog no longer stock products produced there. Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the democratically elected representatives of the country, has repeatedly asked foreign companies to stay away: 'These people... hurrying in to make cosy little business deals while pretending that nothing is wrong... are clearly more interested in making money than helping us to achieve democracy. Putting money into the country now is simply supporting a system that is severely harmful to the people of Burma.' Burma Action Group is urging BHS to reinstate their good reputation by ceasing operations in Burma.

SUCCESS: As we went to press, the Burma Action Group announced that BHS has decided NOT to renew their contracts with UK suppliers of Burmese clothing. As a result, the Burma Action Group have called off all scheduled protests against the company.

Peace in Burma
of the 90s
BURMA business buys Bullets
Bhs

Although BHS claim that their sourcing decisions are taken on a clearly commercial basis, the Burma Action Group think that the negative publicity attracted by the BHS boycott campaign was a significant factor in BHS' decision to stop buying clothes made in Burma.

BURMA ACTION GROUP

Source: Burma Action Group UK, Collins Studios, Collins Yard, Islington Green, London N1 2XU, England

STREET CHILDREN

A chance to tell their story

Street festival offers hope to Ghana's homeless children

A STREET YOUTH festival is being organized in the Ghanaian capital city of Accra to benefit its 45,000 street children.

During the last decade economic pressure due, in part, to the implementation of structural-adjustment policies have made it impossible for Ghanaian families to provide the support they once gave their members. As a result increasing numbers of Ghanaian children are being forced on to the streets. There are even street children in Ghana's small rural towns and villages. Alhaji Mumuni Bawumia, Chairman of Ghana's Council of State, admits that: 'We cannot delude ourselves that the problem is limited to urban areas.'

CHRIS STEELE PERKINS / MAGNUM

There are 45,000 street children in Accra alone.

Most street children, some as young as six, are engaged in menial labour. They work as shoe shiners, coolies, trolley pushers and trinket sellers, while some are undeniably engaged in prostitution. Government efforts to reduce the number of children on the street have been negligible, largely because 73 per cent of the Ministry's budget goes into salaries alone.

PS Abeka, a director of the National Youth Commission, says that: 'A good number of the street youth already have training in some employable skills. The problem is the capital to start off or in most cases, just a set of tools.'

However, there is now a glimmer of hope for Ghana's youngest and most vulnerable citizens. The National Youth Commission and a number of non-governmental organizations, including the Commonwealth Youth Programme, Response, and Catholic Action for Street Children, are in the process of organizing a street youth festival. The festival is intended to provide Ghana's street children with an opportunity to tell their stories to the nation. The festival's organizers hope this will sensitize Ghanaian policy makers, and motivate them to act on behalf of the children. The festival organizers have also established a street youth fund aimed at netting $50,000 in three years, to help provide Ghanaian street children with the tools and training they desperately need. ■

Yaw Owusu Addo

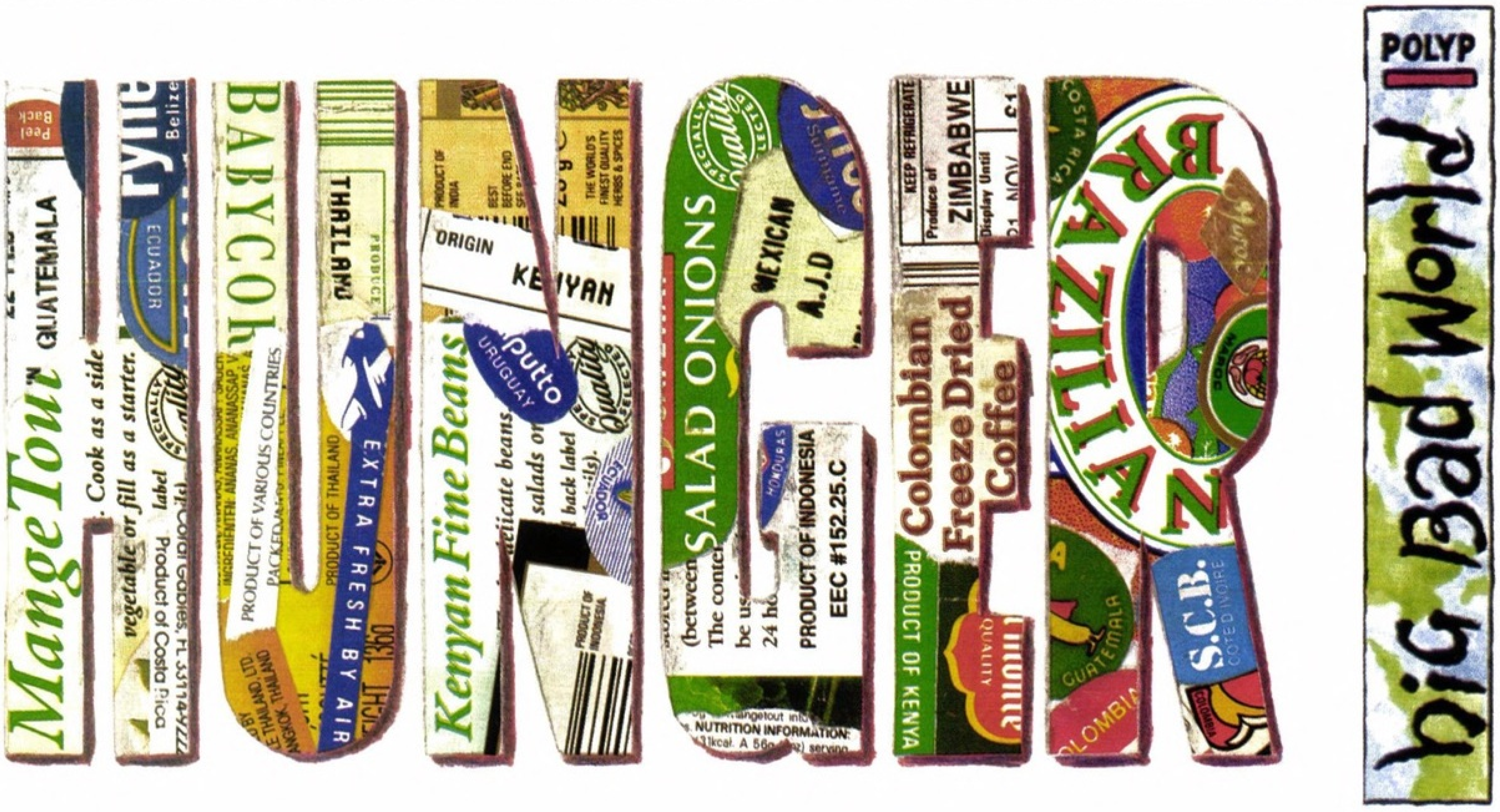
Legal torture

A bill entitled 'Prohibition on Torture', if passed by the Israeli Parliament, will make Israel the only country in the world to legalize torture. While the bill prescribes prison terms for any public servant convicted of inflicting or authorizing torture, it defines torture as 'severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, except for pain or suffering inherent in interrogation procedures or punishment according to the law.'

Therefore if a detainee is physically or mentally brutalized while being interrogated, it is not considered to be torture. Human-rights organizations worldwide have described the bill as an 'outrage' and a 'grave international precedent'.

Amnesty International is calling for the complete abolition of torture in Israel. They state that interrogation procedures should conform to the absolute ban on torture in international conventions, and ask that people write to their local government representative, asking them to raise their concerns about torture in Israel with their governments. They ask that you also write to the Israeli Prime Minister, at the Israeli Embassy in your country, urging him to abolish the use of torture.

Source: *News from Within*, 8 August



Update

HUMAN RIGHTS

Silenced

Turkish-Cypriot journalist assassinated

Kutlu Adali, a well-known Turkish-Cypriot journalist, was shot dead outside his home in the Turkish occupied territories of Cyprus on 7 July of this year. Adali is one of four Turkish-Cypriots to have been killed in separate incidents on the island last summer. Turkish-Cypriots are rapidly becoming an endangered minority within the Turkish part of Cyprus. According to an article Kutlu Adali wrote in 1995, 40,000 Turkish-Cypriots have left Cyprus since 1974, to be replaced by 100,000 mainland Turks. 'It will soon be difficult to pinpoint a single Turkish-Cypriot on the Island,' Adali wrote earlier this year.

Although a census has yet to be carried out in the Turkish-occupied part of Cyprus, at least a fifth of the population now consists of Turkish military personnel. A 40,000-strong Turkish army garrison has turned Northern Cyprus into 'one of the most highly militarized areas in the world, in terms of civilian-military personnel ratio,' according to UN General Secretary Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

A shadowy group, calling themselves 'The Turkish Revenge Brigade' claims responsibility for Kutlu Adali's assassination. But according to a woman witness, who has identified and named the killers, they were Turkish army officers. The Turkish-Cypriot police claim they began 'carrying out a widespread investigation' shortly after the assassination. However, their only announcement since then has been that the crime was committed with a small handgun. In fact Adali died from multiple bullet wounds inflicted by a 9mm machine gun, a weapon regularly used by the Turkish military.

The Government of Cyprus, which controls the Southern, Greek-Cypriot portion of the island, has produced videotaped evidence that officials of the Northern, Turkish-Cypriot government were involved in Adali's assassination and the other Turkish-Cypriot killings.

'Kutlu was an ardent believer in Turkish-Cypriot, as distinct from mainland Turkish, identity,' one of his former colleagues said. 'The problem for him was that both Greek and Turkish-Cypriots did not have enough confidence in themselves, or in each other.' An estimated 8,000 people attended his funeral and, in London, 2,000 Turkish-Cypriots signed a petition demanding the arrest of the killers, yet Adali's assassination has been overlooked by the mainstream press. ■

Sergios Zambouras

KUTLU ADALI

8,000 people attended the funeral of journalist Kutlu Adali.

Good tidings

The Indian Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has decided to ban deep-sea fishing operations in Indian-controlled oceans. The decision came after traditional fisherfolk and the operators of small mechanized boats had protested against deep-sea fishing. They argued that the super-efficient vessels used by companies encroached on their fishing fields. The decision could mean the cancellation of all licences granted for deep-sea fishing operations under joint venture, lease and charter policies. The ban, if implemented, would involve 16 joint-venture companies with a fleet of 61 deep-sea fishing vessels and 57 vessels on lease.

VANESSA BAIRD

Traditional Indian fisherfolk to be protected by commercial deep-sea fishing ban.

Source: *Down to Earth*, 16 September 1996

Nigeria looks East

Nigerian president General Abacha seems to be circumventing Western threats of economic sanctions by encouraging companies from Malaysia, South Korea and China to invest in Nigeria. Abacha has been under pressure to reform his regime ever since he executed nine Ogoni activists, including Ken Saro-Wiwa, in November 1995. Abacha's son, Mohammed, plans to bring South Korea's Daewoo Corporation into offshore oil production near the oil-rich Niger Delta. Nigerian Oil Minister Dan Estete backs the deal.

Source: *Africa Confidential*, 6 September 1996

Quote

'Post-modernism? I don't know what that means. But I suspect it's a scam thought up by intellectuals to keep themselves employed.'

Noam Chomsky (1928 -) US thinker and activist.

Seduced by technology

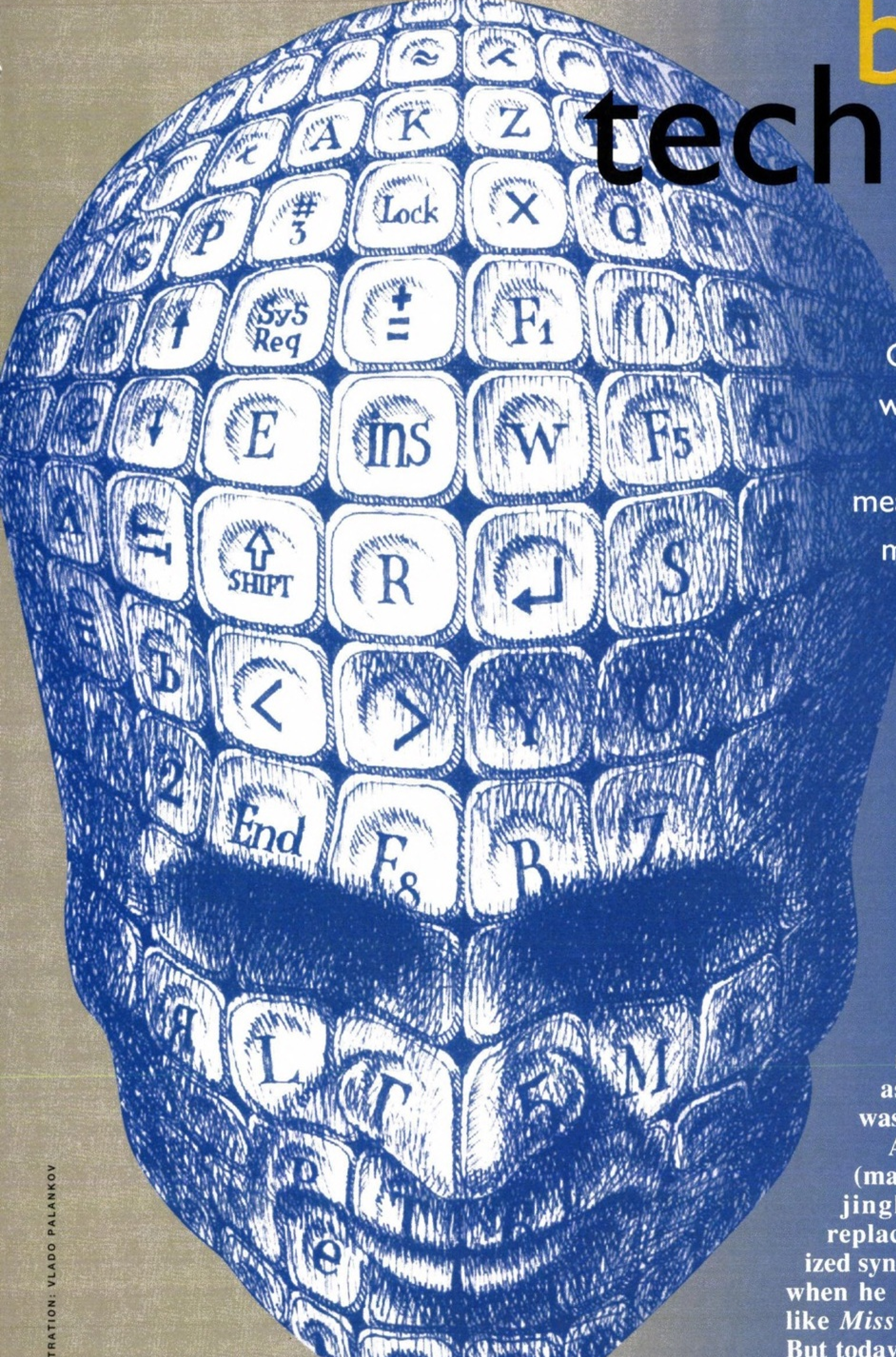


ILLUSTRATION: VLADO PALANKOV

Computers are changing the world, and not always for the better. **Wayne Ellwood** measures the human costs of the micro-electronics revolution.

MY neighbour, Nick, is a soft-spoken, easy-going fellow who owns a big, ungainly hound named Duffy and has a passion for music. He's been a freelance musician all his adult life and plays the double bass for a living – an imposing, upright, stringed instrument that's virtually the same size as he is. But things have changed in the music business: it's not as easy to earn a living as a freelance musician today as it was a few years ago.

A lot of the well-paid 'session work' (making commercials and advertising jingles) has disappeared and been replaced by pre-programed, computerized synthesizers. Nick still plays in the 'pit' when he can – in splashy, touring musicals like *Miss Saigon* or *Phantom of the Opera.* But today he also works part-time in a music store, helping to ship out trumpets and

CRISPEN HUGHES / PANOS PICTURES

Sudanese general cozies up to his laptop: computers have dramatically changed the nature of war.

French horns to school bands and re-stocking inventory when new shipments arrive.

Nick is not untypical these days. In fact his story is just one of millions that unveil the other side of the computer revolution – the human costs and consequences of the new 'wired world' which receive little attention from government bureaucrats or industry boosters.

Fantastic, science-fiction tinged claims about the benefits of the coming 'information age' are hard to escape. The press is full of hacks extolling the liberating virtues of electronic mail and tub-thumping about how the Internet will unite the masses in a sort of electronic, Jeffersonian democracy (at least those with a personal computer, modem and enough spare cash to pay the monthly hook-up fee).

'If you snooze, you lose' is the underlying message. Jump on board now or be brushed aside as the new high-tech era reshapes the contours of modern life. This is not the first time that technology has been packaged as a panacea for social progress. I can still recall a youthful Ronald Reagan touting for General Electric on American television back in the 1950s: 'Progress is our most important product,' the future President intoned.

That ideology of progress is welded as firmly to computers in the 1990s as it was to the power-loom in the early nineteenth century, the automobile in the 1920s or nuclear power in the 1960s. Yet the introduction of all these technologies had disastrous side effects. The power-loom promised cheap clothing and a wealthier Britain but produced catastrophic social dislocation and job loss. The car promised independence and freedom and delivered expressways choked with traffic, suburbanization, air pollution and destructive wars fought over oil supplies. Nuclear power promised energy 'too cheap to meter' and produced Chernobyl and Three Mile Island.

There is a lesson here that can and should be applied to all new technologies – and none more so than computers. One of the century's more astute analysts of communications technologies, Marshall McLuhan, said it best: 'We shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us.' In his cryptic way McLuhan was simply summing up what a small band of dogged critics have been saying for decades. Technology is not just hardware – whether it's a hammer, an axe or a desk-top PC with muscular RAM and a pentium chip. Limiting it in this way wrenches technology from its social roots. The conclusion? It's not 'things' that are the problem, it's people.

This has the simple attraction of common sense. Yet the more complex truth is that technologies carry the imprint of the cultures from which they issue. They arise out of a system, a social structure: 'They are grafted on to it,' argues Canadian scientist Ursula Franklin, 'and they may reinforce or destroy it, often in ways that are neither foreseen or foreseeable.'[1] What this means is that technology is *never* neutral. Even seemingly benign technologies can have earth-shaking, unintended, social consequences.

The American writer Richard Sclove outlines what happened when water was piped into the homes of villagers in Ibieca in north-eastern Spain in the early 1970s. The village fountain soon disappeared as the centre of community life when families gradually bought washing machines and women were released from scrubbing laundry by hand. But at the same time the village's social bonds began to fray. Women no longer shared grievances and gossip together; when men stopped using their donkeys to haul water the animals were seen as uneconomical. Tractors began to replace donkeys for field work, thus increasing the villager's dependence on outside jobs to earn cash needed to pay for their new machines. The villagers opted for convenience and productivity. But, concludes Sclove: 'They didn't reckon on the hidden costs of deepening inequality, social alienation and community dissolution.'[2]

When it comes to introducing new technologies we need to look less at how they influence our lives as individuals and more at how they impact on society as a whole.

Let's consider computers for a moment. Over the last decade new technologies based on micro-electronics and digitized data have completely changed the way information is transmitted and stored. And word processors and electronic mail have made writing and sending messages around the globe both cheap and quick. 'Surfing the net' (clicking around the Internet in a random fashion for fun and entertainment) has become the fashionable way to spend your leisure time. But these are benefits filtered through the narrow prism of personal gain.

Even benign technologies can have earth-shaking consequences

What happens when we step back and examine the broad social impact? How else are computers used? Let's look at just four examples:

The money maze: The computer that allows us to withdraw cash from an automatic teller, day or night, is the same technology that makes possible the international capital market. Freed from the shackles of government regulation corporate money managers now shift billions of dollars a day around the globe. 'Surfing the yield curve,' big money speculators can move funds at lightning speed, day and night – destabilizing national economies and sucking millions out of productive long-term investment. The global foreign exchange trade alone is now estimated at more than $1.3 billion a day.

Computer games: They come in all shapes and sizes and you can find them as easily in Kuala Lumpur as in Santiago or Harare. They vary from the jolt-a-second, shoot-'em-up games (often offensively sexist) to the mesmerizing hand-held and usually more innocuous variety. Now think of 'Desert Storm', the world's first (and certainly not the last) electronic war. Lethal firepower as colourful blips on our TV screens, charred bodies reduced to the arcing trail of an explosive starburst.

The ability to kill and maim large numbers of our fellow human beings is not a new skill. We've been able to destroy human life many times over for more than half a century and computers have not changed that reality. What they have done is sideline human decision-making in favour of computer programs – making catastrophe ever more likely. As one software engineer has pointed out, complex computer programs require maintenance just like mechanical systems. The problem is that 'every feature that is added and every bug that is fixed adds the possibility of some new interaction between parts of the program' – thus making the software *less* rather than *more* reliable.[3]

Information as power: This is the mantra of those who suggest that both the Internet and the World Wide Web will establish a new on-line paradigm of decentralized power, placing real tools for liberation into the hands of the marginalized and the poor. That's a tall order but it is nonetheless true that the new communications technologies can be used positively by political dissidents and human-rights activists. Examples abound. At the 1995 UN Conference on Women in Beijing the proceedings were posted instantaneously over the Net thus bringing thousands of women, who would have otherwise been left out, into the discussions.

This 'high-tech jujitsu', as critic Jerry Mander calls it is both valiant and necessary. But it doesn't change the key fact that computers contribute more to centralization than to *de*centralization. They help activists, but they help the centralizing forces of corporate globalization even more. This is what the communications theorist Harold Innis described as the 'bias' of technology in the modern era. Computers, as the most powerful of modern communications tools, reflect their commercial and military origins.

Efficiency and employment: Technology has always destroyed jobs. In the economy of industrial society that is its main purpose – to replace labour with machines, thereby reducing the unit cost of production while increasing both productivity and efficiency. In theory this spurs growth: producing more and better jobs, higher wages and an increased standard of living. This is the credo of orthodox economics and there are still many true believers.

But evidence to support this view in the real world of technology is fading fast. More widespread is the pattern detailed in a recent Statistics Canada report which underlined the growth of a 'two-tiered' labour market in that country. On the top tier: long hours of overtime by educated, experienced and relatively well-paid workers. And on the bottom: a large group of low-paid, unskilled and part-time workers 'who can be treated as roughly interchangeable'.[4] And then there are those who miss out altogether – the chronic jobless, the socially marginalized who form a permanent and troubling underclass.

This same trend is repeated throughout the industrialized world. In the US author Jeremy Rifkin says less than 12 per cent of Americans will work in factories within a decade and less than two per cent of the global work force will be engaged in factory work by the year 2020. 'Near-workerless factories and virtual companies' are already looming on the horizon, Rifkin claims. The result? 'Every nation will have to grapple with the question of what to do with the millions of people whose labour is needed less or not at all in an ever-more-automated economy.'[5]

Computerization is at the core of the slimmed down, re-engineered workplace that free-market boosters claim is necessary to survive the lean-and-mean global competition of the 1990s. Even factory jobs that have relocated to the Third World are being automated quickly. In the long run machines will do little to absorb the millions of young

The Internet... a brief history

1950s: Cold war paranoia

In the late 1950s when the average computer would have filled your living room, Pentagon planners dreamed of a computer system to manage military affairs that would be resilient enough to survive nuclear attack. Instead of centralized control, information would be accessible simultaneously from every entry point. If one part of the system was destroyed the rest of the network would remain intact.

Control panel of world's largest calculator (60ft x 20ft), New York, 1948

HULTON DEUTSCH

1969: ARPANET

Washington spent millions on the system. In 1969 the precursor of today's Internet was developed by the US Government-backed Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) and the National Physical Lab in Britain. The original network, ARPANET, had four users. It was turned over to the US Defense Communications Agency in 1975.

1987: NSFnet

A network catering to academic institutions and military researchers was launched by the US National Science Foundation in 1987. Regional networks were connected to the NSF 'backbone' and to a similar network developed by the NASA space centre in Houston. By 1989 the number of 'host' computers connected to the Internet had ballooned to more than 28,000 – mostly institutional users. And the system was largely paid for by NASA, the NSF and the universities and research centres that used it.

1989: World Wide Web

The Internet took off in 1989 with the arrival of the World Wide Web (WWW) developed by a Swiss physicist at the European Centre for Particle Research. He was looking for a new way of organizing on-line scientific data.

1993: Hypertext

Then in 1993 an American undergraduate wrote a programme called MOSAIC which used a 'hypertext' system to link documents (text, images, sound and video) to each other. His system eventually became Netscape, currently the most popular of the Web 'browsers'.

1995: Privatized cyberspace

The Internet became a commercial operation in early 1995 when the US Government pulled out of the 'backbone' business and turned over the operation to private corporations like MCI and IBM.

TECHNOLOGY CHECKLIST

Scientist and activist Ursula Franklin believes technologies should be less the purview of experts. The following points are adapted from a list which Dr Franklin assembled a few years ago as a way of clarifying public debate and decision-making around new technologies.

We need to ask of any new technology: does it...

1 Promote social and economic justice?
2 Restore reciprocity or consolidate power in the hands of a minority?
3 Confer benefits which can be divided among the many or monopolized by the few?
4 Favour people over machines?
5 Maximize economic gain at the expense of social and environmental costs?
6 Favour conservation or waste?
7 Favour the reversible over the irreversible, so if problems occur after the technology is adopted steps can be taken to reverse the impact?

people in Asia, Africa and Latin America who will be searching for work in the coming decades. Slowly, that sobering fact is beginning to strike home. A Chinese government official recently warned that unemployment in the world's most populous nation could leap to 268 million by the turn of the century as Chinese industries modernize and automate.

In the long run computers don't eliminate work, they eliminate workers. But in a social system based on the buying and selling of commodities this may have an even more pernicious effect. With fewer jobs there is less money in circulation; market demand slackens, re-inforcing recession and sending the economy into a tailspin. The impact of automation on jobs is a dilemma which can no longer be ignored.

Though thinkers in the green movement have been grappling with this issue for over a decade, most governments and even fewer business people are prepared to grasp the nettle. Both cling to the increasingly flimsy belief that economic growth spurred by an increasing consumption of the earth's finite resources will solve the problem. It won't. And serious questions need now to be raised about alternatives.

First, we need to think about democratizing the process of introducing new technologies into society and into the workplace. At the moment these decisions are left typically in the hands of bureaucrats and corporations who base their decisions on the narrow criteria of profit and loss. This blinkered mindset that equates technological innovation with social progress needs to be challenged.

But there is also the critical issue of the distribution of work and income in a world where waged labour is in a steady, inexorable decline. We can't continue to punish and stigmatize those who are unable to find jobs just because there aren't enough to go around. Instead, we need to think creatively about how to redefine work so that people can find self-esteem and social acceptance *outside* of wage labour. This may mean redesigning jobs so that workers have more control and input into decisions about which technologies to adopt and what products to make. Up to now this has been exclusively a management prerogative. But it also means developing strategies to cut the average work week – without cutting pay. This would be one way of sharing the wealth created by new technology and of creating jobs at the same time. The Canadian paperworkers union featured later in this issue has been a leader in this area. Hard work also needs to go into designing a plan for a guaranteed annual social wage. This is a radical (some would say outrageous) idea for societies like ours that have anchored their value systems on the bedrock of wage labour.

But how can we deny people the basic rights of citizenship and physical well-being simply because the economic system is no longer capable of providing for them? ■

Resources for action...

Alliance for Progressive Communications (APC)

A global communications consortium of 21 member networks dedicated to serving NGOs and citizens working for social equality, economic justice and environmental sustainability. Provides e-mail, Internet and other communications links to more than 40,000 NGOs, activists, educators and community-leaders in more than 133 countries. If your country is not listed below contact the APC Secretariat for further information.

APC International Secretariat, Rua Visconde de Ouro Preto 5, Seventh Floor, 22250-180 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Tel: +55 (0)21 553 0676;
Fax: +55 (0)21 552 8796;
E-mail: apcadmin@ax.apc.org
Web site: http://www.apc.org/index.html

UK: *Greenet*, 74-77 White Lion Street, London, N1 9PF. Tel: 0171 713 1941; Fax: 0171 837 5551; E-mail: support@gn.apc.org
Web site: http://www.gn.apc.org/

Canada: *The Web*, NirvCentre, 401 Richmond Street West, Suite 104, Toronto, ON M5V 3A8.
Tel: 416 596-0212; Fax: 416 596-1374
E-mail: outreach@web.apc.org
Web site: http://www.web.apc.org/

South Africa: *SangoNet*, PO. Box 31, 13th floor Longsbank Building, 187 Bree Street, Johannesburg 2000. Tel: (11) 838-6944;
Fax: (11) 492 1058;
E-mail: support@wn.apc.org
Web site: http://wn.apc.org/sangonet.html

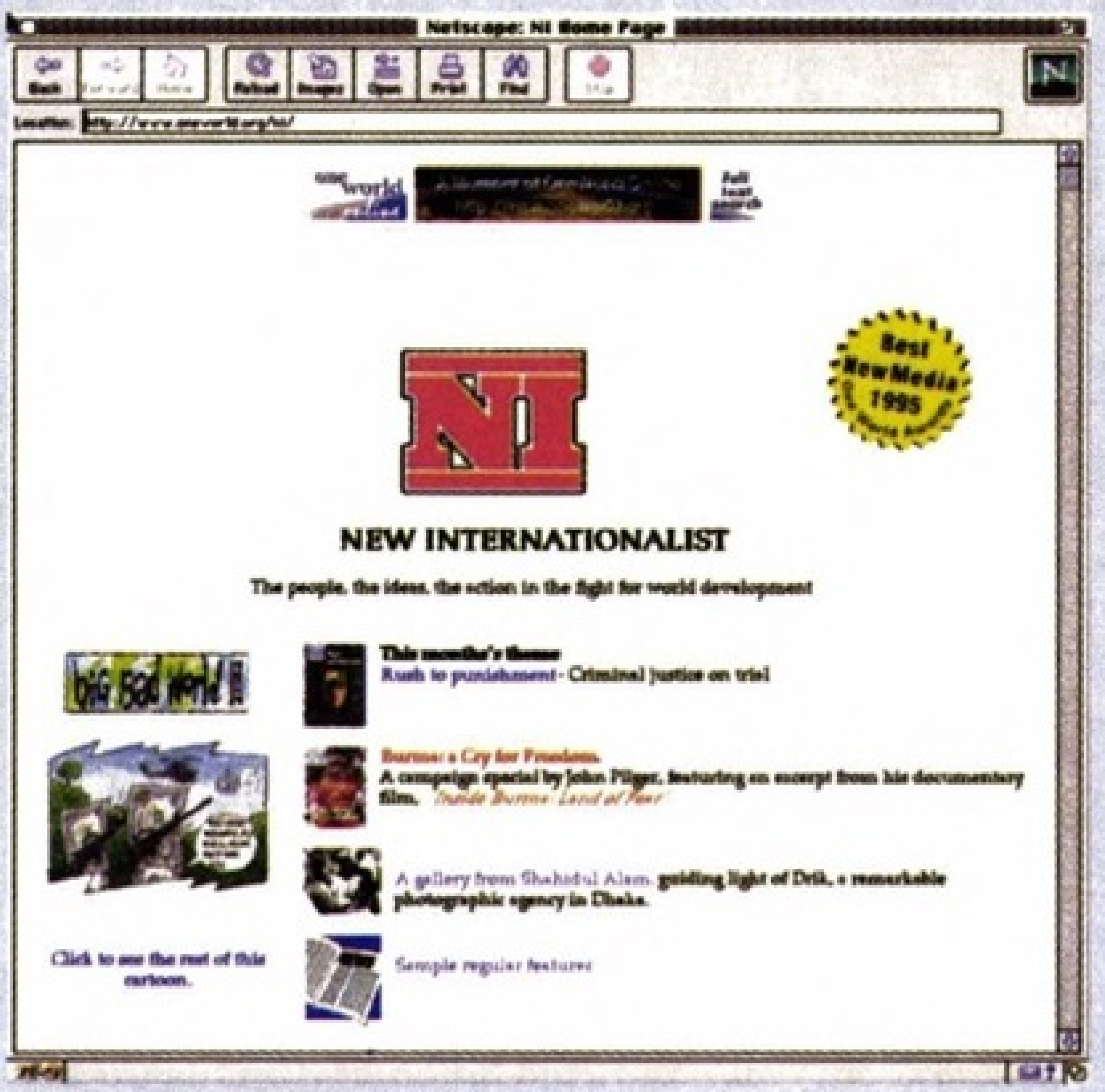
Australia, Pacific Islands, Southeast Asia, Asia: *Pegasus Networks*, PO Box 3220, South Brisbane Qld 4101 Australia.
Tel: 7 3255 0255; Fax: 7 3255 0555
E-mail: pegasus@peg.apc.org
Web site: http://www.peg.apc.org/

Aoetearoa/NZ: *PlaNet(NZ)*, 78 Straven Rd, Christchurch, Canterbury 8001. Tel: 3 343-2633
E-mail: support@planet.apc.org.nz
Web site: http://www.chch.planet.org.nz/

USA: *Institute for Global Communications (IPC)* includes ***PeaceNet, EcoNet, ConflictNet, LaborNet, WomensNet***
18 De Boom Street, San Francisco, CA 94107.
Tel: 415 442 0220; Fax: 415 546-1794;
E-mail: igc-info@igc.apc.org
Web site: http://www.igc.apc.org/

New Internationalist Web Site

We now have our own World Wide Web site where you can check out back issues of the magazine and get all the information you need to know on subscriptions and ordering our other range of publications.
Our Web site is: http://www.oneworld.org/ni/



NEW INTERNATIONALIST

The people, the ideas, the action in the fight for world development

This month's theme
Rush to punishment - Criminal justice on trial

Burma: a Cry for Freedom.
A campaign special by John Pilger, featuring an excerpt from his documentary film, *Inside Burma: Land of Fear*

A gallery from Shahidul Alam, guiding light of Drik, a remarkable photographic agency in Dhaka.

Click to see the rest of this cartoon.

Sample regular features

One World Online, Hedgerley Wood, Red Lane, Chinnor, Oxon, UK 0X9 4BW Tel: 01494 481629; Fax: 01494 481751; E-mail: oneworld@bbcnc.org.uk
Web site: http://www.oneworld.org/
UK-based organization working with NGOs involved in global justice issues. Helps launch and support Web sites using the Internet for publicity, recruitment, fundraising and education.

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1 *The Real World of Technology*, Ursula Franklin, Anansi Press, Toronto, 1990. 2 'Making Technology Democratic', Richard Sclove, from *Resisting the Virtual Life*, eds James Brook and Iain Boal, City Lights, San Francisco, 1995. 3 *Why Things Bite Back: Technology and the Revenge of Unintended Consequences*, Edward Tenner, Knopf, New York, 1996. 4 *Canadian Economic Observer*, Statistics Canada, July/96. 5 *The End of Work*, Jeremy Rifkin, Putnam Publishers, New York, 1995.

The Internet explained

Picture a maze-like garden of forking paths with each path connected to its neighbour and thousands of new paths being added daily. That's roughly how the Internet looks. But how does a message travel along those pathways?

Digitized data
SERVER OR HOST COMPUTER
Digitized data packets forwarded by 'router'
SERVER
SERVER
SERVER
SERVER
SERVER
SERVER
SERVER
SERVER

ILLUSTRATION: KAREN DONNELLY

1 Suppose you're in Aotearoa/New Zealand and you want to send a message to your uncle in Boston. Whether it's a brief letter, a mathematical formula or a photo of your dog the 'information' is all treated in the same way. First it is digitized, that is, turned into the mathematical language that computers use to communicate.

2 The digitized data in the form of electronic blips then travels along phone lines to your local provider or 'server'. Here it's broken down into chunks called 'packets'. Each 'packet' is labelled with the address of the recipient, in this case something like myuncle@aol.com.

3 A computer called a 'router' next reads each addressed packet and sends your data in the right general direction to the next 'server'. None of the 'routers' has a map of the whole Internet. They only have an idea of their little patch of it and the best way to get to the next point in the network. This process continues from server to server, mostly on telephone lines leased from existing telephone companies.

4 Depending on traffic flow different parts of the same message may be sent by entirely different routes, only to be electronically stitched back together at their final destination. Since electronic communication is for all practical purposes instantaneous it doesn't matter whether your uncle's message goes via Sydney or San Francisco. Eventually, providing there are no drastic system crashes en route, your message arrives at the computer of the Internet service provider that your uncle is signed up with.

5 Next time he checks his electronic mail he'll find your re-assembled message on the screen in front of him.

Dumbing us down

Convinced that kids will be left in the dust unless they get computer literate? Anxious about getting your local school wired up to the information age? Well, don't be. **Theodore Roszak** argues that computers in the classroom are not all they're cracked up to be.

By now most of what there is to say about the Internet is predictably clichéd. As usual it all has to do with stuffing lots of information into people's lives. Surfing the net, the hot new way to get information, begins by logging on to a variety of World Wide Web search engines like Yahoo that use keywords to find items. Almost all the search engines are commercially sponsored and feature advertising, some of it enticingly presented with lots of colors and blinking lights and cartoony images. Sometimes there is a prize for choosing this or that link, or maybe an Elvis Presley sighting is promised. Or there might be a big, bright link that says Don't Click Here! If you do you get a Dr Pepper soft-drink advert or some such.

Some Web sites are perfectly intelligent, conscientious efforts created by universities, government agencies, publishers or organizations like the Smithsonian Institution or the Library of Congress. Others feature celebrity gossip, sports, comics, jokes or pornography. With 20 or 30 machines running material like this in the classroom one can imagine teachers having some difficulty keeping everybody's attention focused on the assignment at hand.

If teachers can get the kids beyond the advertising and ask them to learn about, say, Aztecs, the search engine may produce on the order of 45,000 'hits' containing that word somewhere in the searched copy. This will include everything from soccer teams, used-tire companies and disco clubs to bowling alleys and software firms... Yes, the search can be refined, but not always that easily for younger students since all the engines use different protocols. Even so, the refined search will continue to produce lots of wastage because the waste is there and because the search engine, simply keyed to words, is a dumb thing that cannot tell waste from value. On the Internet, there is no quality control as there would be in any school library. If a bibliography on the real, historical Aztecs surfaces amid the gleanings it may very well be out of date and unattributed. It might be the work of an amateur Aztec enthusiast in Peoria who never read basic materials in the field. If there is an essay on the Aztecs it may have been written by a fellow in Moose Jaw who has rather unusual theories about pre-Columbian peoples and space aliens. The Internet is a free-for-all, as enjoyable as any conversation one might strike up in a saloon or coffee house. But it is hardly governed by the critical safeguards and intellectual structures that have been developed across the centuries to discriminate between honest thought and rampant eccentricity.

Some Web enthusiasts consider such structures a kind of élitist censorship. They might even regard the Dewey library catalogue system an infringement on the free flow of information. On the other hand I have heard no serious complaint that key words on the Web are now rented out by some search engines so that people seeking that kind of information will be steered toward a commercial product or service. On InfoSeek, a search for the words Christmas, Mothers Day, music, recipe (rented for as much as $1,000 each) is likely to produce some merchant's on-line catalogue.

Out of curiosity I recently asked a librarian if she had ever considered renting out space for advertisements in the card catalogue or its on-line version. She was first bewildered, then shocked. 'We would never do anything like that,' she said. That is the voice of public service.

In contrast, the Web is a creation of the entrepreneurial worldview. It favors high-tech effects and attention-grabbing tricks. The key forces behind it are seeking desperately to transform the medium into the new television, the new movies. Their objective is to get millions to look at their site so that they can make a lot of money. This is no secret: the main, ongoing story about the Web is how much profit its backers are (or are not) making. What passes through the medium is bound to be shaped by those values, not by any significant regard for quality, truth or taste. Used as a teaching device the Web is an expensive way to distract attention and clutter the mind. I would not see it eliminated from our society for that reason, but neither would I choose it as an educational resource. Over the generations teachers have evolved skills to encourage a respect for quality, truth and good taste. I'm not sure I understand why we should, at the behest of entrepreneurial elements, now decide to retire those skills in favour of 'Yahooligans'.

I drew up the attached list of rules to embody in as compact a way as possible the reservations I have about computers in the schools. I have tried to mention everything that gets left out of the compulsory enthusiasm in which every report on the Net and the Web comes wrapped. I offer it in the name of balance.

EDWARD PARKER / STILL PICTURES

Computers in the schools: 19 neo-Luddite rules

1 Computers are merchandise. Treat them as such. Believe nothing you hear from people who are selling (and these days everybody is selling). Expect nothing to work as advertised.

2 People who recommend more computers for schools are like doctors who prescribe more medicine. What medicine? How much medicine? For what reason? The same questions apply to computers. Only the answers may be a long while coming since schools have to consult and budget to decide which computer to buy (Macintosh, PC?), which operating system (DOS 6.2, System 7, OS/2, Windows 3.1, Windows 95?), which programs?

3 By the time a school decides to buy anything it will be out of date. Rapid obsolescence is a key marketing strategy of the computer industry.

4 Computers are not a free choice. The money to buy them comes from places that need it more. For example: hiring more teachers at better salaries, buying lab equipment, books, art supplies, musical instruments, repairing the plumbing, fixing the roof.

5 No computer is any better than the software you run on it. The further the subject is from computation and objective right-or-wrong, the dumber the software. In some subjects (literature, history, creative writing, art) don't even bother looking.

KEYS
AMMO
HITS
NTC

Learning to operate a computer at a private school in Peru: expect nothing to work as advertised.

6 No two people mean the same thing by computer literacy. Ten years ago computer literacy meant teaching kids BASIC to do their own programing. Then it meant desktop publishing. Then it meant multimedia. Now it means cruising around in cyberspace. Next year it will mean something else that requires updates and enhancements, faster chips, new programs and for sure spending more money. Computer literacy is a commercial fashion, not a specific skill, let alone a subject matter. If computer literacy does not include material on what computers can't do and shouldn't do, it is advertising, not education.

7 The main thing kids learn from computers is how to use computers. And anything they learn today is apt to be obsolete in two years. Absolutely nothing kids learn about using a computer in the first grade today will make them more employable when they leave high school. Employers should be left to teach what their employees need to know about the firm's computer system after hiring them.

8 When it comes to employment the computer is not working-class friendly. Computers don't create jobs; they eliminate the employment many kids would otherwise have. If we could delete computers from history tomorrow, there would be more jobs the next day than there are now.

9 Teachers who are reluctant to revamp the curriculum so they can intrude computers upon their pupils (and contribute to Microsoft's earnings) probably have good pedagogical reasons for their reservations. Trust them and hear them out before you spend the money. Portraying cautious teachers as obstacles to progress is a mean trick computer enthusiasts play to discredit the people who care most about education.

10 Playing computer games is not the same as learning. Games are fun, nothing wrong with that. Learning is another kind of fun, often related to long intervals of dogged attention, persistent questioning, strong doubt, memorizing things, looking things up, being bored, overcoming frustration. Games and learning have their own kind of joy. Confusing the two is the worst lesson to teach kids.

11 All CD-ROM materials do more to fragment the attention span than to teach anything. CD-ROM was invented by clever hackers to display the razzle-dazzle, hypertextual, multi-media capacities of the technology: point-click-zip-wham-wow! Hence there are few CD-ROM teaching materials that require kids to read more than three continuous paragraphs without being distracted by a hypertext link. The pedagogical value of hypertext is totally speculative.

As a teaching device the Web is an expensive way to clutter the mind

12 Some knowledgeable people actually find surfing the Net to be a woeful waste of time. And with good reason. Before wiring your school find out why they feel that way.

13 Spending money to wire your school is the first step toward spending a lot more money after you're wired. The World Wide Web is very, very slow unless it is run on fast equipment and the latest software, none of which is free. All freebies from the computer industry should be regarded as you would a free sample from your friendly neighborhood crack dealer.

14 The World Wide Web is primarily an advertising medium. The main information kids will find on it is advertising. All the search engines used to find anything are rigged with advertising. Almost all information-bearing homepages are studded with advertising. The main reason enthusiasts want it in the schools is to deliver advertising. If you don't believe me, try suggesting that all advertising be eliminated from computers used in schools. Just try. You will be told this is a technical impossibility. It isn't.

15 People who think education equals information have no idea what either information or education is. Always ask computer enthusiasts to define what they mean by information. If they tell you everything is information and information is everything: beware. That's a sales pitch, not a sensible idea. A good working definition of information might be: it is an answer to a question that purports to be a fact. At least a definition like that reminds us that the quality of the question is more important than the quantity of data that appears as an answer. And how do we teach kids to ask good questions?

16 Kids don't need much information

anyway. Not first of all. Teaching them that they do is bad teaching. They need ideas, values, taste and judgement without which information is worthless. Take a simple example: the telephone book contains lots of information. To use it at all kids need to know alphabetical order. But alphabetical order is not information. It is a very old idea about organizing information.

17 Ideas, values, taste and judgement are found in other human minds. And most cheaply in the minds of authors of books and teachers in classrooms. Kids need to learn about those other minds. Let them. A good teacher equipped with enough cheap copies of *Huckleberry Finn* to go around can teach more that kids need to know than the same teacher forced to revamp all she knows to fit the limited skills of a roomful of expensive computers.

18 There are about as many kids born computer-proficient as there are born piano-proficient or poetry-proficient. It is mere folklore that all children born since 1980 have mutated into brilliant computer-users. Different kids have different talents. Provide for as many as your budget allows.

19 A computer is an expensive way to spend a long time getting ready to do anything. A kid with a pencil in her hand is ready to write. A kid with a crayon in his hand is ready to draw. A kid with a computer is ready to... begin a learning curve that starts with booting up, virus-checking, configuring, re-booting if the machine hangs, searching for misplaced files, undeleting lost files, learning the interface, arranging the desktop, re-arranging the desktop, customizing icons, fussing with screen-savers, creating button-bars, resizing and positioning windows, formatting, re-formatting, mastering protocols, downloading, uploading, clicking on menus, choosing fonts, deciphering error messages and reviewing the documentation. Unless, of course, the teacher does all that for the kids and creates the illusion of easy-to-do.

Or if all of this is too much to remember here is the abridged version:

1 Find out what Bill Gates wants your school to do. Don't do that.

2 Keep a pre-computer image of education in mind at all times, remembering that education predates high tech. Here's one I like: Abraham Lincoln learning to write with a lump of coal on the back of a shovel and growing up to jot the Gettysburg Address on a crumpled envelope. ■

Theodore Roszak is the author of *The Cult of Information: A Neo-Luddite Treatise on High Tech, Artificial Intelligence and the True Art of Thinking* (University of California Press, 1995). His novel *The Memoirs of Elizabeth Frankenstein* was published by Bantam Books, 1996.

On-line lifeline

Third World activists are using global connections to pressure the powers-that-be and even save lives. Bangladeshi photographer **Shahidul Alam** has little doubt about the subversive potential of the Internet in his country.

Feminist writer Taslima Nasreen in hiding after receiving a death threat from Islamic fundamentalists.

'Come out, we won't shoot.' The sound of a police megaphone jolted us to attention. After they left our little flat in Dhaka I went up to the roof to try and find the person they thought we were hiding. I found no-one, but the raid made us realize that the nine-year-old dictatorship of General Ershad was feeling the pressure.

Running Drik, a photo library set up to promote a more positive view of developing countries, we were already in the business of disseminating information. Up to this point we had managed quietly to distribute our photographs abroad through helpful friends. Now the need was more urgent: we had to prevent further bloodshed. We couldn't phone or fax since none of us had an overseas line. Two days later in December 1990, when General Ershad did finally step down, we began collecting the money for the line.

The need came quickly. The new government elected a few months later turned out to be less than democratic after all. So in 1994 we decided finally to take the leap into high-tech communications. We linked up with TOOL, an overseas NGO, and set up our own electronic mail network, called DrikTAP. There was no way we could afford faxes, let alone telephone calls and mail was much too slow. Now with an ordinary telephone line we could send messages overseas cheaply.

We soon discovered that others were keen to jump into e-mail too, so we began to offer it as a service to local NGOs and activists. UNICEF and the Grameen Bank were amongst the first to join. Grameen was in the business of giving loans to the poor and had a wide rural base. UNICEF had field offices all over the country. They used our network to link up all their offices country-wide. Then Drik began to send photographs via e-mail. Something that could only be done earlier by big Western agencies like AP, AFP and Reuters.

Now our little network was beginning to connect to other like-minded groups and Drik was becoming known as an organization out to change the way the poorer

Golam Kasem, 103, Bengal's first Muslim short-story writer and the oldest user of Drik's electronic post office.

PHOTOS: SHAHIDUL ALAM / DRIK

countries were perceived. Our 'bulletin boards' were useful for everyday things like renting a flat or locating an expert but crucial when we needed to stay in touch in times of danger.

Two months later the Bangladeshi feminist writer Taslima Nasreen received a death threat from Islamic fundamentalists and was charged with blasphemy by the Government. We needed to move quickly – to create national and international pressure so Taslima could come out of hiding and defend herself in court. We managed to alert PEN (the international writers support group) and Amnesty International and the campaign took off. Our fragile network was working. Later one of our members showed us how to use traditional 'search engines' to locate human-rights groups and Bangladeshi 'newsgroups' overseas (Bangladesh.Soc.Culture is a good one). We knew things were going to get rougher politically and we needed a way of getting information out fast and cheap. If some of us got arrested, others could mobilize enough pressure to stop us simply 'disappearing'.

Our network became more popular by the month. Major NGOs, universities, research groups, UN agencies, even government organizations and embassies all joined. Conferences on a wide range of subjects sprang up: music, child rights, job applications, even buy-and-sell. We had begun talking to each other and to learn to be comfortable with the medium. We started to use Bangla (albeit in roman script) so we could at least speak our own language. Overseas friends were posting our human rights messages in the popular Bangladesh newsgroups. When police raided the university to arrest student leaders the news was round the world in hours. Letters to the Prime Minister poured in from all over giving us some breathing space and sparing some lives.

Realizing how fragile our link was (a single telephone line connected up all our users, local and overseas) we campaigned for treating e-mail providers as special clients requiring quality lines. Though we were the leading e-mail provider in Bangladesh, DrikTAP was not fully legal – we had no 'official' government permission. On the other hand we were surprised that despite the amount of critical information we were pumping out over the network we had not faced any direct censorship. There had been doubts when one Drik worker was attacked and wounded and again when our server telephone line had been cut for a week. But on the whole we were getting away with it. I suppose shutting down the largest and most popular e-mail network in the country was something even the Government was reluctant to do, particularly with an election looming.

Gradually we began to find other uses for the technology. We set up training programs and eventually an e-mail club where we would meet and discuss problems. We would share the responsibilities of the network and decide collectively on future plans. It was a strange mix. The computer whiz kids and the computer illiterate, both came. Those comfortable with the technology took turns training newcomers. Political activists took on the role of lobbying for extra telephone lines and Internet access.

When Drik could no longer cope with the demand for technical support many of our more experienced members volunteered to help out answering queries. Some set up a system so users outside the capital could access the network using local calls. We began to work more as a family and the network took on a more human shape. We put up a notice for help from a local school that was struggling and a doctor offered his services. Others provided teaching aids, some gave money.

However, e-mail is still very expensive for most Bangladeshis – even local élites. A computer costs as much as half a year's average salary and a modem costs more than a cow, never mind the price of a telephone line. So we began performing like an electronic post office. People come in with a floppy disk; we send their e-mail and they come back later to collect their reply. And not everyone who uses the service is an activist. Our oldest user, Golam Kasem, had just turned 103 and had never seen a computer before. I would cycle over to his house in Indira Road with a printout of a message from his grandson in Canada and next day peddle up to collect his reply. I remember the frail old man, straightening up the computer printout and adjusting his thick glasses as he held the paper by his tungsten lamp.

There are some areas though where we totally failed. Our 'bulletin boards' were entirely dominated by men and many of the jokes were sexist. Some even racist. When a woman user objected to a sexist statement the men retaliated viciously. A few loud voices dominated the bulletin boards. The technology was new to many people. Often private mail would get posted accidentally on a bulletin board, sometimes with embarrassing consequences – making the system scary for novices.

On the whole however, DrikTAP has become a powerful way of talking to the outside world. And, more importantly, to each other. When our 'node' in Bangladesh grew bigger than the one in the head office of our Northern partner in Amsterdam we argued, for political reasons, that the head office should be in the developing world. Last July we proposed re-locating the head office of our global network in Bangladesh. In a small way we are witnessing a shift in the balance of power. ■

Shahidul Alam runs the Drik Picture Library in Dhaka. You can contact him at House 58, Road 15A (New) Dhanmondi R.A. Dhaka 1209, Bangladesh. E-mail: shahidul@drik.bgd.toolnet.org

Privatizing cyberspace

The Internet started as a democratic free-for-all. But not for long. **Nicholas Baran** argues that big business is quietly threatening to subvert the medium's so-called democratic potential.

ELECTRONIC mail has become so hip it's almost a fashion accessory. Ask any e-mail addict and you'll get an earful on how it's the biggest improvement to communications since the telephone. But hype aside, e-mail does have some real advantages. It eliminates the frustration of playing telephone tag and lets people easily share all sorts of information across vast distances. The Internet itself enables instantaneous access to databases and electronic publications around the globe and is a boon for students and researchers as well as ordinary curious and/or bored 'surfers'.

Because the Internet has no central authority and is an amorphous collection of individual networks connected to each other, it is very difficult to impose censorship on it. Although this means that slick porno vendors and neo-Nazi hate groups share cyberspace with the Zapatistas, it also means that the free dissemination of information and ideas is virtually impossible to suppress.

So at first glance you might think that the Internet is one bastion of free speech and democracy that big business will never penetrate. Think again. There are now clear signs that the commercial development of the net and a take-over by corporate conglomerates is underway.

For example, few people know the Internet is now completely owned and operated by private enterprise. Until 1995 the US Government and universities provided much of the funding for the operation of the net's 'backbone' lines – the major transcontinental telephone lines that carry Internet traffic. The Government paid a consortium of computer and telecommunication companies to operate the Internet.

Then the Government quietly pulled out and turned the operation over to a handful of communications giants and the long-distance phone companies. In the US they include major players like AT&T, MCI and Sprint. Internationally they include huge companies like British Telecom, Deutsche Telekom and Japan's NTT. Regional telephone companies and cable television companies are also beginning to offer Internet service.

Because the 'big boys' like AT&T and MCI are just getting into the commercial Internet business, there is still room for 'mom and pop' service providers – small companies that lease lines from the phone companies and sell Internet access to consumers. These outfits typically offer unlimited Internet access for around $20 a month. As demand continues to grow and more capacity is required, the profit margins of these small companies will continue to decline. It is just a matter of time before the big phone companies squeeze the small players out by underpricing them. One small Internet service provider I talked to admitted that profit margins are already 'very tight'.

The biggest obstacle to the survival of a 'free and democratic' Internet is that the telecom companies own the infrastructure on which the Internet operates. The Internet is already running out of room (complaints about busy signals and intolerably slow performance are common), and the telephone and cable companies are investing heavily to provide more capacity. This new capacity will appear in the form of fibre-optic cable which offers much higher transmission capacity than standard copper telephone cable that exists in most neighborhoods today.

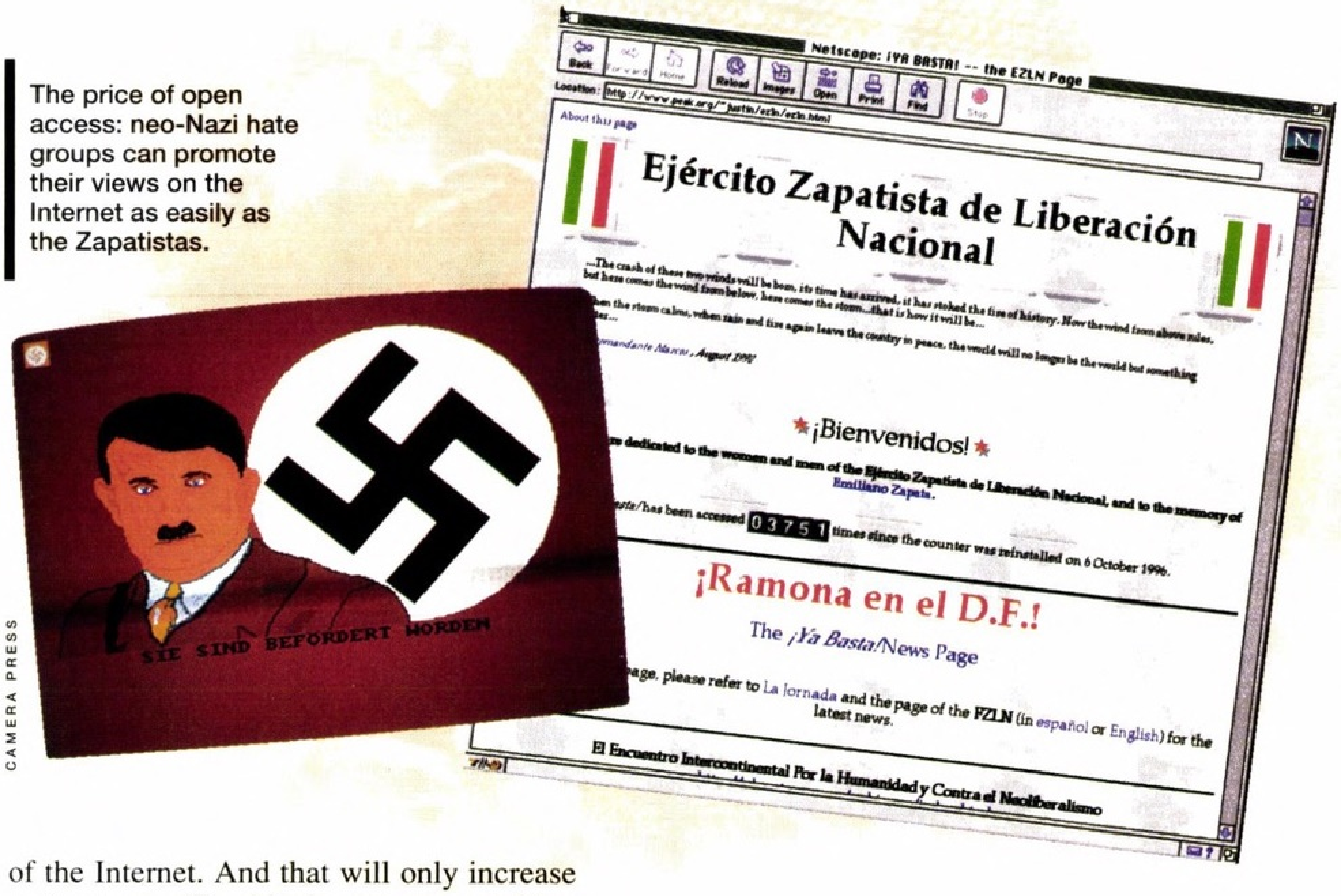
The cost of wiring the US is estimated in the hundreds of billions of dollars. One way or another these companies intend to reap a return on their investment. It is clear that most consumers are unwilling to pay

A high-tech telephone box in Tokyo: Japan's NTT is one of the major corporations jockeying for control of the information highway.

ふれあい TELEPHONE
TELEPHONE
ここは南石堂町1304番地です
ビジネス気分で!TELコール
1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9
* 0 #
FAX OK
COOL 冷
WARM 暖
NTT

JIM HOLMES / AXIOM

large monthly access fees (surveys indicate that $35 per month is about the maximum) and therefore the telecoms will turn to advertisers. Once advertising takes root on the Internet the democratic voices will be marginalized, much like progressive publications today are on the margins of the mainstream media.



Netscape: ¡YA BASTA! -- the EZLN Page

Location: http://www.peak.org/~justin/ezln/ezln.html

About this page

Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional

...The crash of these two winds will be born, its time has arrived, it has stoked the fire of history. Now the wind from above rules, but here comes the wind from below, here comes the storm...that is how it will be...

…hen the storm calms, when rain and fire again leave the country in peace, the world will no longer be the world but something …ter...

…omandante Marcos, August 1992

¡Bienvenidos!

…is dedicated to the women and men of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, and to the memory of Emiliano Zapata.

…asta/ has been accessed 03751 times since the counter was reinstalled on 6 October 1996.

¡Ramona en el D.F.!

The ¡Ya Basta! News Page

…age, please refer to La Jornada and the page of the FZLN (in español or English) for the latest news.

El Encuentro Intercontinental Por la Humanidad y Contra el Neoliberalismo

CAMERA PRESS

The price of open access: neo-Nazi hate groups can promote their views on the Internet as easily as the Zapatistas.

Another technical advance which will boost commercialization of the Internet is the 'electronic envelope,' in which information can be 'sealed' until it is paid for by a credit card or some other electronic accounting system. A system called DigiBox is expected to hit the market soon. While digital envelopes may be a good thing for artists and writers whose works require copyright protection, it will turn the Internet into a commercial publishing and entertainment platform, dominated by companies with the most advertising muscle, much as the print publishing market is dominated today.

Like most new technologies the Internet is primarily used in industrialized countries. The biggest growth is in the US where the per capita ownership of personal computers (PCs) far exceeds that of any other country (about 20 million personal computers are sold annually there). And a personal computer is a prerequisite for gaining access to the Internet. In China PCs are priced close to $2000, about four times the average urban annual income of $480. But even in industrialized countries Internet access is a pricey proposition. Buying a PC, modem and software and paying a monthly access fee just isn't an option for low-income families trying to make the monthly rent and put food on the table for their kids.

Most people still prefer reading the newspaper in an easy-chair

While full commercialization is probably inevitable, how the Internet will evolve is unclear. First of all few companies are actually making any money on the Internet yet. Most firms investing heavily in Internet-related projects are working with venture capital or have deep pockets like Microsoft and the big telecom companies.

Despite agressive marketing, consumer confidence remains a major problem. Transaction security is tenuous and most people still prefer reading the newspaper in an easy-chair rather than staring at a computer screen. But perhaps the biggest challenge and one that receives little attention is the enormous technical complexity of the Internet. And that will only increase as it grows. The big investors are taking huge risks in assessing what it will cost to compete successfully.

Take cable TV: the industry is investing heavily in converting its cable infrastructure to support Internet traffic. Coaxial TV cable now reaches 90 per cent of US homes (though only 60 per cent actually subscribe) and is now making inroads in Europe. Coaxial cable has far greater transmission capacity than the standard twisted-pair copper cable used by the phone system. You would think then that the cable industry is well-positioned to elbow its way in to the Internet.

But it's not so easy. The cable industry faces daunting technical challenges. The present coaxial cable system is designed for one-way traffic – the consumer receives the TV signal but sends nothing back. The Internet requires two-way traffic – people sending e-mail back and forth, as well as other types of data. The conversion to two-way traffic is an enormous and complex project. Interference is a major problem as well as overloaded lines in heavily-trafficked neighborhoods. The cable industry may find a technical nightmare on its hands coupled with huge expenditures and potential losses. It's a crapshoot and the outcome is far from certain.

Because the Internet's future is unpredictable the transition to full commercial operation is going to take years. One possible outcome is that the Internet could evolve into a 'two-tiered' system in which high-speed access costs more and low-speed access is still available at an affordable price. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to restrict access to the Internet from a standard phone line and modem. However, more sophisticated services such as on-line movies or 'virtual reality' shopping malls may only be available to consumers paying high-access fees and having sophisticated equipment.

If this happens most text-based Internet data such as e-mail and 'newsgroups' would still be available through low-speed access – equivalent to today's standard 28.8 modems. In this case affordable access would survive and gradually spread to low-income groups and to the Third World, but without the bells and whistles.

But the most likely way for a democratic Internet to survive is to keep adding users, particularly in Third World countries. Basic Internet access can be accomplished with older model personal computers and with inexpensive modems and software.

I am writing this article on an old Compaq bought in 1982 and worthless in the marketplace today. But it can connect to the Internet and I am sending the article electronically to my editor at the New Internationalist. Many old PCs end up in junk yards or collecting dust in warehouses. Many of them could still be used as Internet terminals.

The more people who get on-line, the harder it will be to get them off when the big boys figure out their pricing structure. There is hope yet for a robust and democratic international Internet. ■

Nicholas Baran is consulting editor for *BYTE Magazine* and author of *Inside the Information Highway Revolution*, Coriolis Group Books, 1995.

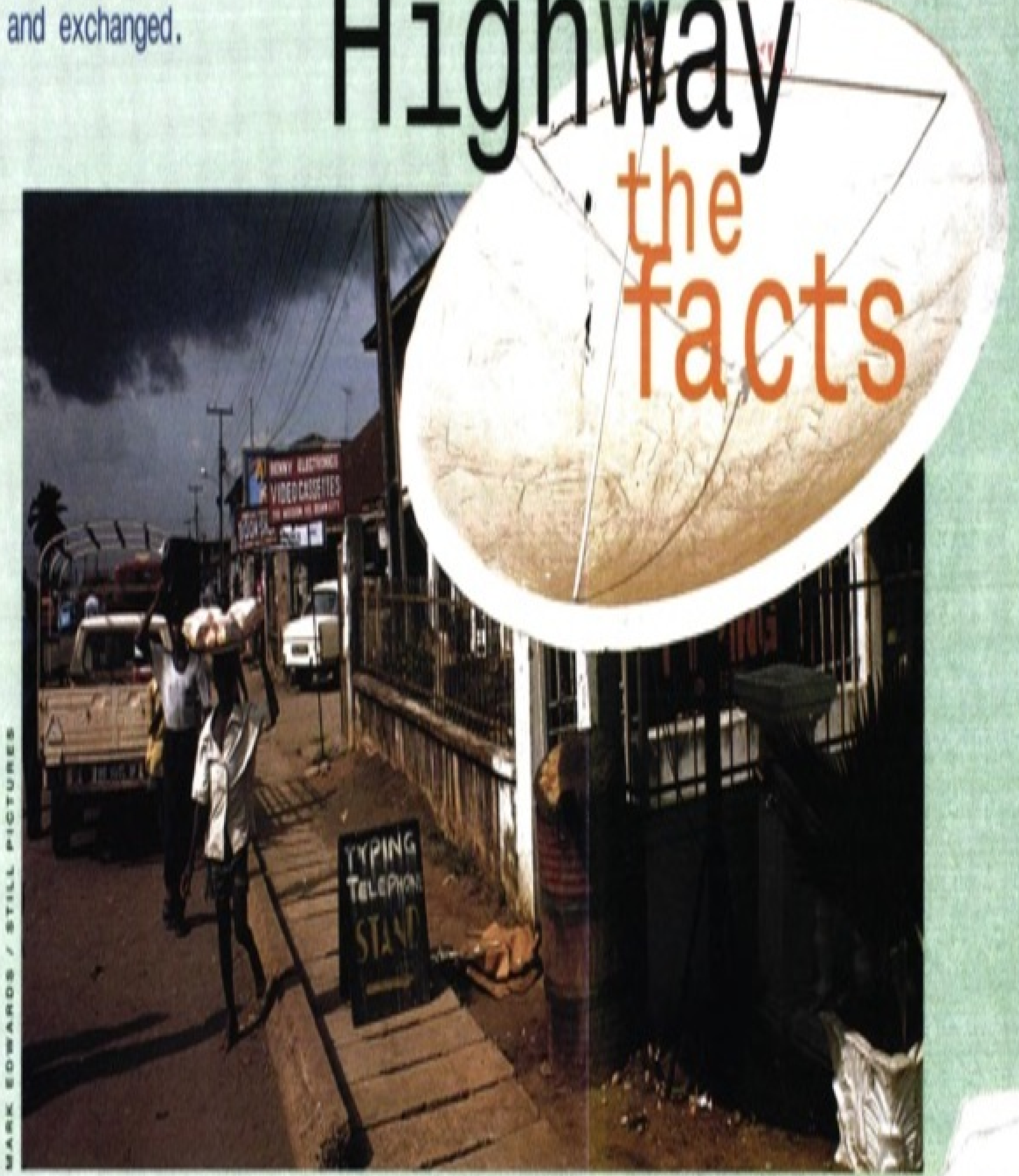
The Information Highway
the facts

Micro-electronics is changing the world at a blinding speed as the 'third industrial revolution' replaces brain power with machine power. Communications technologies, driven by high-speed micro-processors, fibre-optics and satellite systems have changed profoundly the amount and speed at which information can be stored, transmitted and exchanged.

Road blocks

There is a huge gap in telecommunications infrastructure between rich and poor worlds and the technologies that complement computer networks are also unevenly distributed.

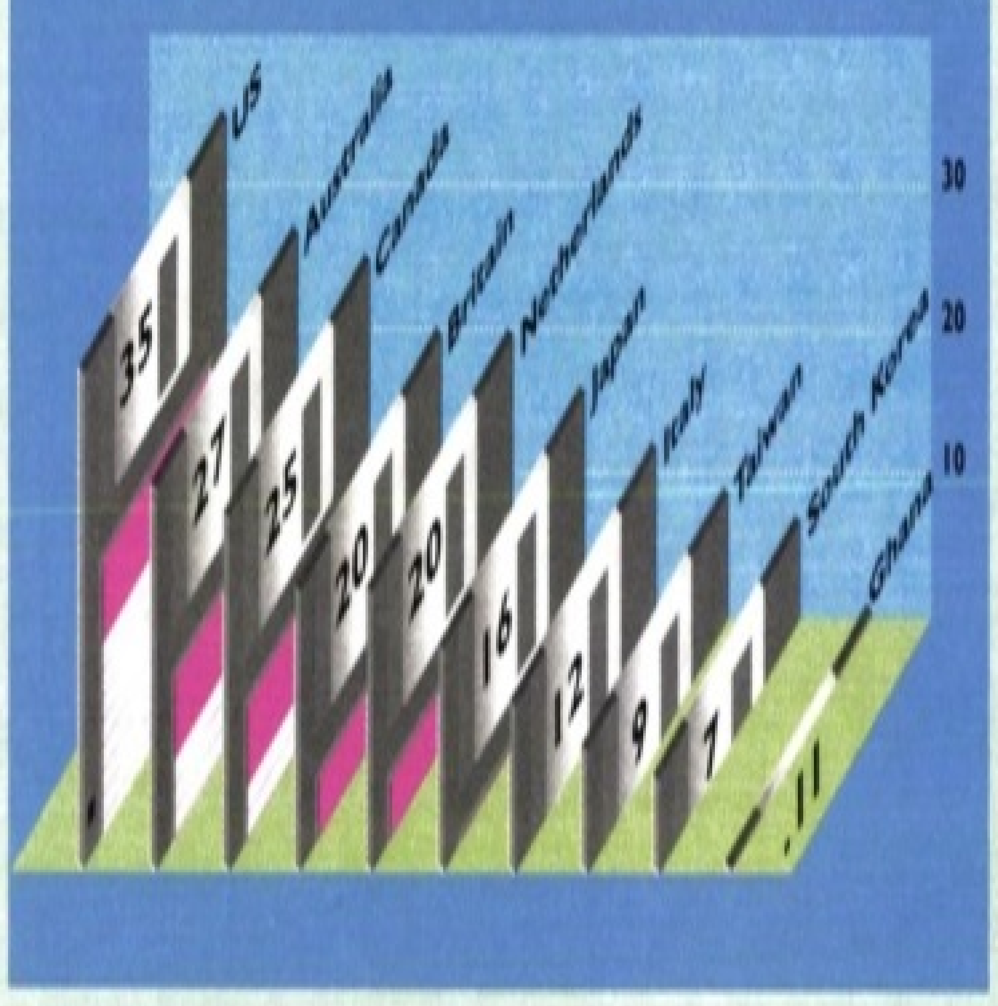
⚠ At least 80% of the world's population still lacks the most basic communications technologies. Nearly 50 countries have fewer than one telephone line per 100 people. There are more telephone lines in Manhattan than in all of sub-Saharan Africa.[1]


MARK EDWARDS / STILL PICTURES

Basic Telecommunications Infrastructure

Region by income	Population (millions)	GDP/Cap (US dollars)	Phone lines (per 100 people)	Personal computers (per 100 people)
low	3,147	$415	1.5	0.14
lower middle	1,111	$1,529	8.4	0.72
upper middle	508	$4,515	14.4	2.68
high	839	$22,621	51.9	18.26

Computers per 100 people (1995)[3]



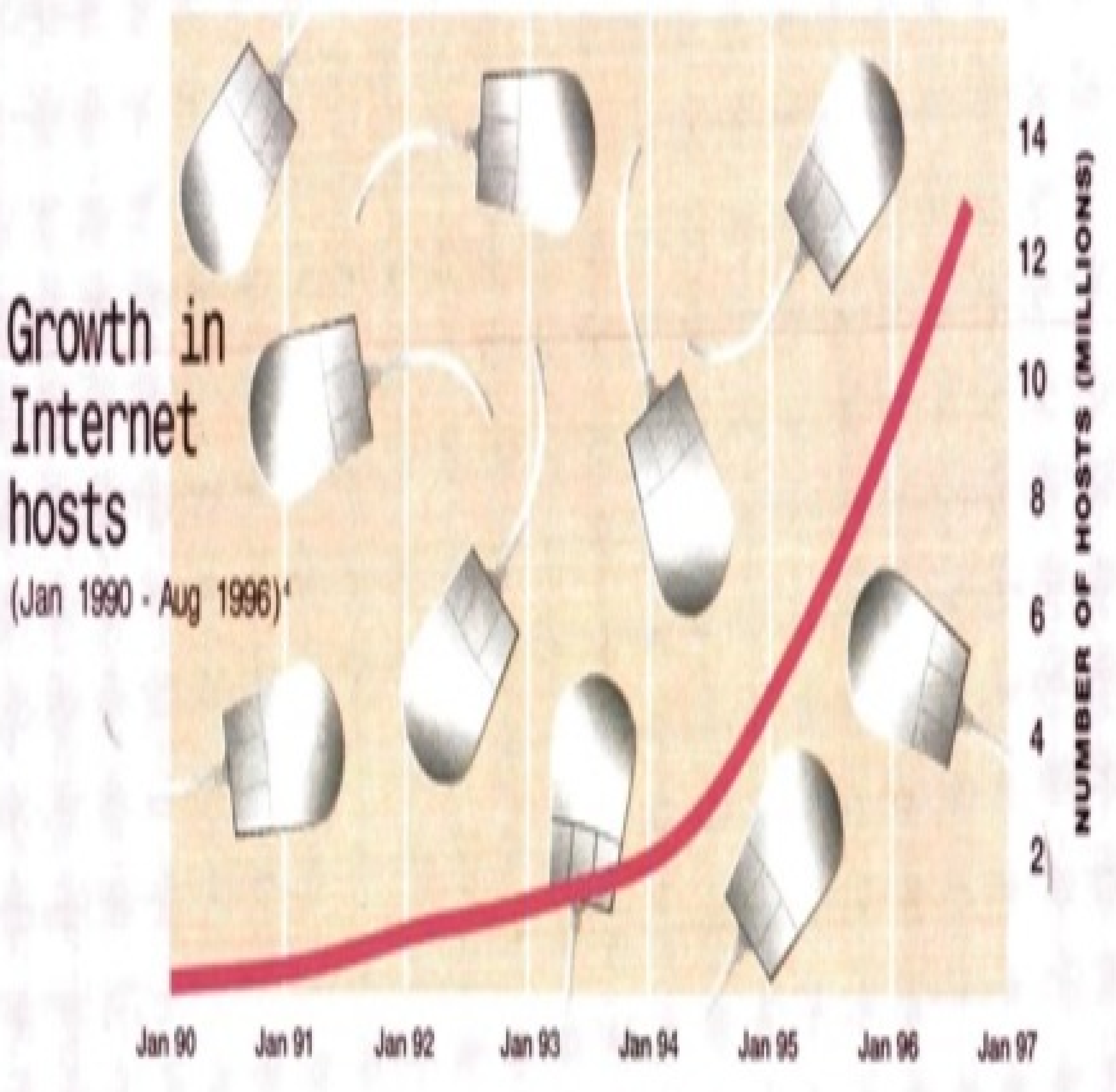
Wired world

The number of Internet users may be as high as 50 million and there are an estimated 10,000 new computer hosts (computers through which users connect to the network) added daily.

However, over 90% of Internet hosts are in North America and Western Europe and access by poor countries to global high-tech communications is severely limited.

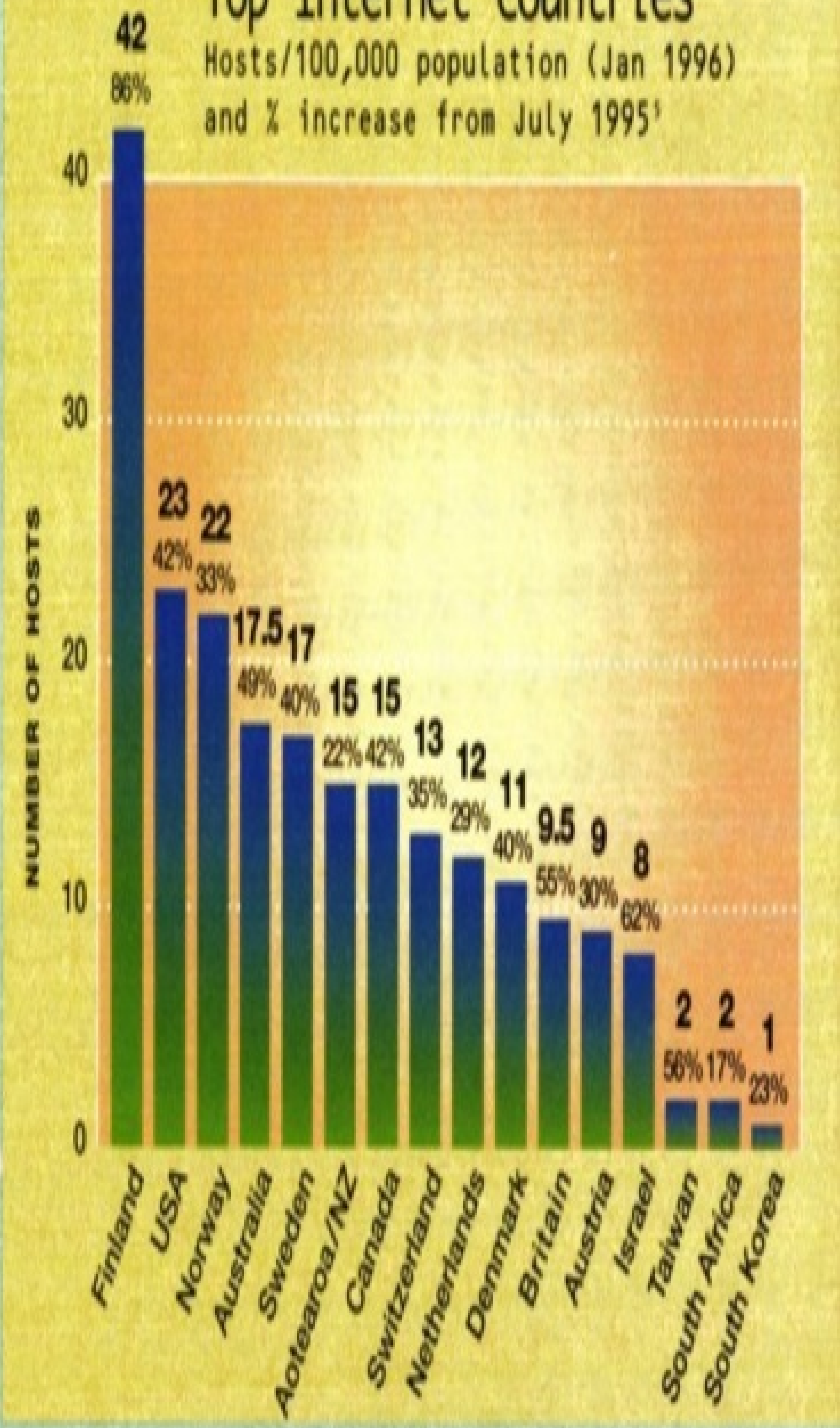
Growth in Internet hosts

(Jan 1990 - Aug 1996)[4]



Top Internet countries

Hosts/100,000 population (Jan 1996) and % increase from July 1995[5]

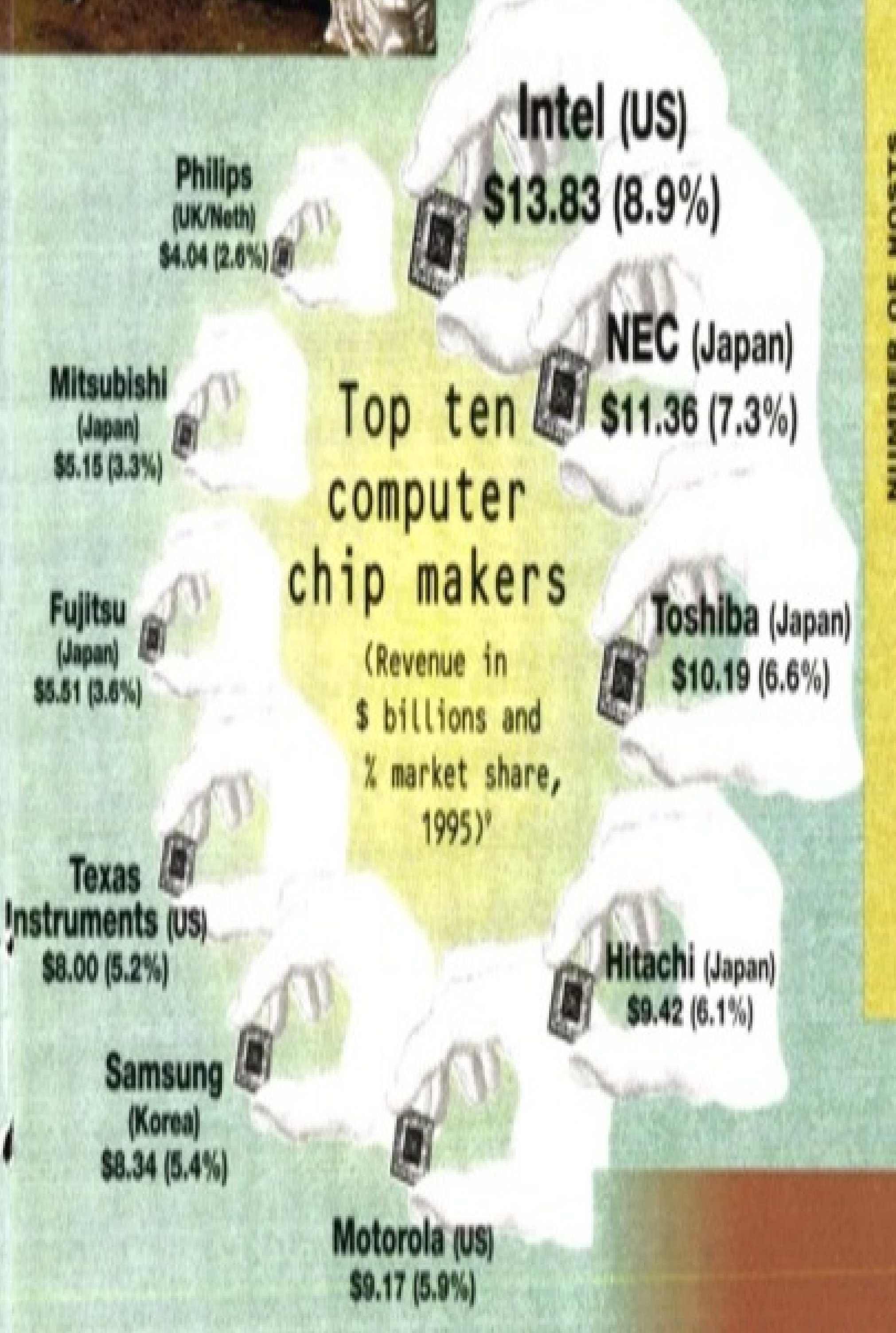


Cashing in chips

Miniature electronic circuits called microprocessors or semiconductors provide computers with their prodigious memories but they are also at the heart of a huge variety of consumer goods, from microwave ovens to hand-held computer games. The worldwide sale of computer chips was more than $150 billion in 1995, three times what it was a decade earlier. The industry is controlled by a small number of American and Japanese corporations.

Top ten computer chip makers

(Revenue in $ billions and % market share, 1995)[9]



McJobs

It's impossible to correlate job losses directly to workplace computerization. Unemployment due to automation usually falls under the categories of 're-structuring' or 're-engineering'. Nonetheless:

⚠ Most new jobs are in the service sector: low-skilled, low-paid, part-time and insecure. Nearly a fifth of all new employment in the US is temporary and the country's largest employer is now Manpower Inc., a temporary-help agency that employs twice as many people as General Motors.[6]

⚠ The International Metalworkers Federation in Geneva predicts that by 2025 as little as 2% of the current global labour force will be needed to produce all the goods necessary for total consumption.[7]

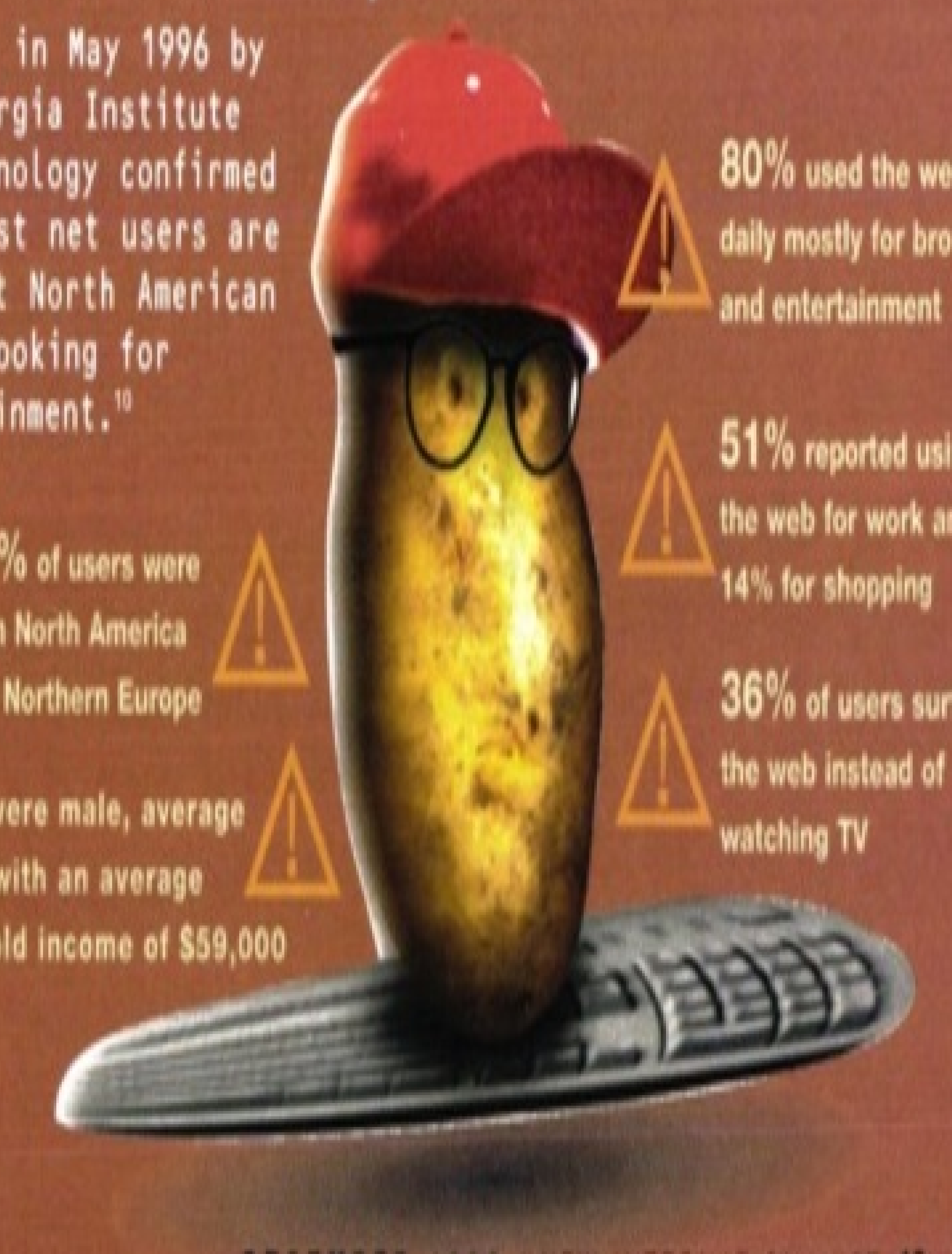
⚠ From 1983-93 banks in the US replaced 37% of their workforce with automated banking machines (ATMs). Another 30-40% of jobs in banking and finance may be eliminated by the year 2001.[7]

⚠ Corporations are now in the process of automating Third World factories as even 'cheap labour' proves too dear. Chinese plans to restructure and introduce computerized production could throw as many as 30 million people out of work.[8]

CHRIS STOWERS / PANOS PICTURES

Surf potatoes

A study in May 1996 by the Georgia Institute of Technology confirmed that most net users are affluent North American males looking for entertainment.[10]



⚠ 84% of users were from North America and Northern Europe

⚠ 69% were male, average age 33 with an average household income of $59,000

⚠ 80% used the web daily mostly for browsing and entertainment

⚠ 51% reported using the web for work and 14% for shopping

⚠ 36% of users surf the web instead of watching TV

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1 *The Internet and the South: superhighway or dirt-track*, Panos Briefing Document No 16, October 1995, Panos, London, UK. 2 *World Telecommunications Development Report*, International Telecommunications Union, 1995, Geneva, Switzerland. 3 World Economic Forum, 1995. 4 General Magic, Aug 96, Web site: www.genmagic.com 5 Network Wizards, Jan 96, Web site: www.nw.com 6 *Stand up for good jobs*, AFL-CIO, June 1996. Web site: www.aflcio.org 7 *The End of Work*, Jeremy Rifkin, Putnam Publishers, New York, 1995 8 *Wall Street Journal*, 16 Feb 1994, p A13 9 *The Economist*, 23 March 1996, p20 10 Georgia Tech Graphics Visualization and Usability Centre, 5th WWW User Survey, Atlanta, Georgia, USA, 1996. Web site: www.cc.gatech.edu/gvu

When the
Digital
Revolution
rolls over you,
you're either
part of the steamroller
or part of
the road.
WIRED
ENO

Of mouse and man

Dale Spender examines the macho environment of information technologies and asks whether women can make a place in cyberspace.

JAY MALLIM /IMPACT VISUALS

Software magnate Bill Gates: total control and total power.

EVERYBODY has heard of Bill Gates, the 40-year-old American computer whiz who began selling software when he was still at school and now runs a $70-billion business with 80 per cent of the global market. The man has used his combination of technical and entrepreneurial skills to amass the biggest personal fortune the United States has ever known.

There are many men in the computer business who think Gates has an unfair monopoly. They claim he has sewn up the market. And that he has made it impossible for them to compete by using unfair and bullying tactics.

'Because he controls your software, Bill Gates is going to control your life and your mind,' one worried 'wannabe' warned on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation show *Four Corners*. 'You may as well start filing your tax returns with him, because he's going to control all the information of the future.'

Despite the hyperbole, the argument put forward by Gates' critics is powerful. The fact that someone gets there first shouldn't give them ruling rights to the territory. Everyone is entitled to a share. But it's not just the principle of fairness. It's because it is dangerous when any one person – or one group – has such total control and power.

That is the central idea of democracy: that the views and values of all members of society should be represented. Only then can you have an equitable and cohesive community – and that is why it's not on for Bill Gates to control 80 per cent of the software industry.

I go along with this argument. It is one I use every day as a feminist. But what I do object to, vehemently, is the total gender (and race) blindness of Bill Gates' critics.

While there are no definitive figures on the male monopoly of the new technologies, the consensus is that men dominate in every area. The only exception I've found is that sometimes there are more women on the help desks. Men own the cyberworld. And the reason they're in charge is, like Bill Gates, they got there first. Whether the mogul is Mr Murdoch, Mr Packer, Mr Turner or Mr Berlusconi it's clear that it is not women's experience that is being used as the basis for prioritizing, planning and shaping the new information society.

And the much touted 'information superhighway' is one of the most male-dominated areas of all. Even if every man using the Internet were a creature of courtesy, a paragon of virtue, a sensitive soul with vision and warmth, the superhighway would still be extremely intimidating to women with all those men out there treating the space as their own. Setting the pace and the tone.

It's the culture of it that is intimidating. Like the men's change room at a football match. Even if the guys invited you in and promised you would have a good time you'd have to think twice (and locate the exit) before you even considered venturing into their den.

The evidence that males are hogging the information superhighway is overwhelming. Lynda Davies of Griffith University paints a disturbing picture of the male 'techie heads' who hang out in most university computer science labs and who engage in gross behaviour to intimidate women and prevent them from getting a share of the services and time on the net.[1] And I have documented some of the serious sexual harassment that takes place in computer rooms, on-line and in schools. Boys who would never dream of showing off a *Playboy* magazine (or worse) in a classroom think it is 'cool' to put pornographic images on the computer screens of female students.

Researchers like Nola Alloway have shown how even three-year old boys will physically prevent three-year old girls from using the computer at pre-school – accompanied by taunts that 'girls can't do computers'.[2] This is where the stand against male power should be made quite clear. It is not just that the men (like Bill Gates) are taking up most of the space. After all this is not surprising given the history of technology and gender. What is unfair, unjust and frankly offensive are the bullying tactics that are being employed to keep digital power in the hands of men. There is a pressing need for protocol and for codes of conduct on the Internet. We need strategies which ensure fair play and guarantee plurality and diversity within the new culture of cyberspace. And we need to provide women with anti-trust training and monopoly-breaking skills. I am a great advocate of self-defence skills for women in the digital community.

The time for challenging male power is now. Unless changes are made quickly women could be locked out of the digital medium in much the same way they were when the printing press was invented. The shift from hand-written manuscript to the printed book led to an information revolution no less in scale than the one we are experiencing now.

Women and the working class and other out-of-power groups were worse off after that revolution than they were before. And it has taken almost 500 years to remedy the situation. Within the last two decades we have seen the rise of women's publishing houses, women's bookshops, women's university courses – and a veritable explosion in the number of books by women, about women and for women. And all that since women have been in charge of their own information, their own words.

The irony is that just as some women have made it in the print-based system, the rules of the game have been changed. So women will be sent to the back of the queue again – with an additional handicap. Our society believes that girls aren't as 'good' as boys when it comes to machines. In a computer-based world it's boys who have the edge. This doesn't mean there is something wrong with women. Far from it. The 'reticent' relationship that women have with computers says more about the limitations of the technology (and the consciousness that gives rise to it) than it does about women's abilities.[3] But what is at stake here is more than the mere management of a machine.

From now on most learning in the arts and sciences will take place via computer. And those who have no access, no expertise in the area, will be as severely limited as those who are illiterate in a print-based culture. This is not to suggest that women cannot excel in information technology. There are many wonderful women in science and technology. And a number of talented, entrepreneurial, role-modelling women in the cyber-industry. Their achievement and presence should be held up, admired, emulated and celebrated. But this doesn't alter the statistics on women and technology – or on women and computers.

Boys think it's cool to put pornographic images on computer screens

In fact studies show the number of women in computer science has been falling since the 1970s.[4] And the trend continues. Why? Because women are sensible and cautious. They don't go where they are not wanted. It's too dangerous. From childhood they have been taught that when there's trouble between the sexes, they will get the blame for being in the wrong place at the wrong time – in the wrong dress.

Women are too well socialized and too sensible to move unthinkingly into territory where men have put up 'No Trespassing' signs and where they threaten to 'flame' ('insult' in cyberspeak) those who take no notice. This situation has its dangers.

That women should be 'information poor' and have to embark on yet another campaign for equal representation in an area appropriated by men is only part of the problem. The other part is that we have a medium in which only half of human experience and interest, half of all human values, are being drawn upon and given expression. With a mainly male input into new technologies we end up with an emphasis on 'toys for the boys' – at the expense of women's contribution which is more about relationships and consequences.

This is how the entire community loses.

Cyberspace presents us with an unprecedented opportunity to plan and shape the future. But instead of learning from the past we are transferring old ways to the new frontiers. That means that once more women and other disadvantaged groups will have to take back some of the territory that men have appropriated. But there's no doubt that they will achieve their ends.

After all look what happened with the telephone – another male invention initially monopolized by men. It was a machine that was widely regarded as 'unsuitable' for women who were only good at 'face-to-face' contact. It hasn't taken all that long for women to make the telephone their own.

It's my belief that once women recognize the communication potential of cyber-society they won't have any problem learning how to talk on-line. ■

Young women in Malaysia coming to grips with computers: men dominate in every area of new technology.

CHRIS STOWERS / PANOS

Dale Spender is an Australian feminist writer and scholar and the author of more than 30 books including *Man-made Language* and the recently published *Nattering on the Net.*

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1 'The Gendered Language of Technology,' Lynda Davies; paper given at the International Communication Association Conference, Sydney, July 1994 2 *The Construction of Gender in Early Childhood*, Nola Alloway, Curriculum Corporation, Carlton 1995 3 'Computational Reticence: Why women fear the intimate machine,' Sherry Turkle in *Technology and Women's Voices*, edited by Cheris Kramarae, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1988. 4 'Information Technology and Gender; problems and proposals' in *Gender and Education, Vol VI, No 1*, Anne Cole, Tom Conlon, Sylvia Jackson, Dorothy Welch, 1994. And 'Men, women and computers,' Barbara Kantrowitz, *Newsweek*, May 1994.

Wiring Africa

The World Bank and AT&T are combining forces to run fibre-optic cable around the whole of Africa. **Cathy Majtenyi** and **Michele Fleet** find out what's at stake.

AMERICAN Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T) along with the French company Alcatel Submarine Networks plans a $2.65 billion project to encircle the African continent with 39,000 km of fibre-optic cable. Dubbed 'Africa One' by its corporate sponsors the scheme will connect 41 African states including all coastal countries and surrounding islands.

AT&T Submarine Systems will begin laying the cable in 1997 and is hoping to have the system up and running by the year 2000.

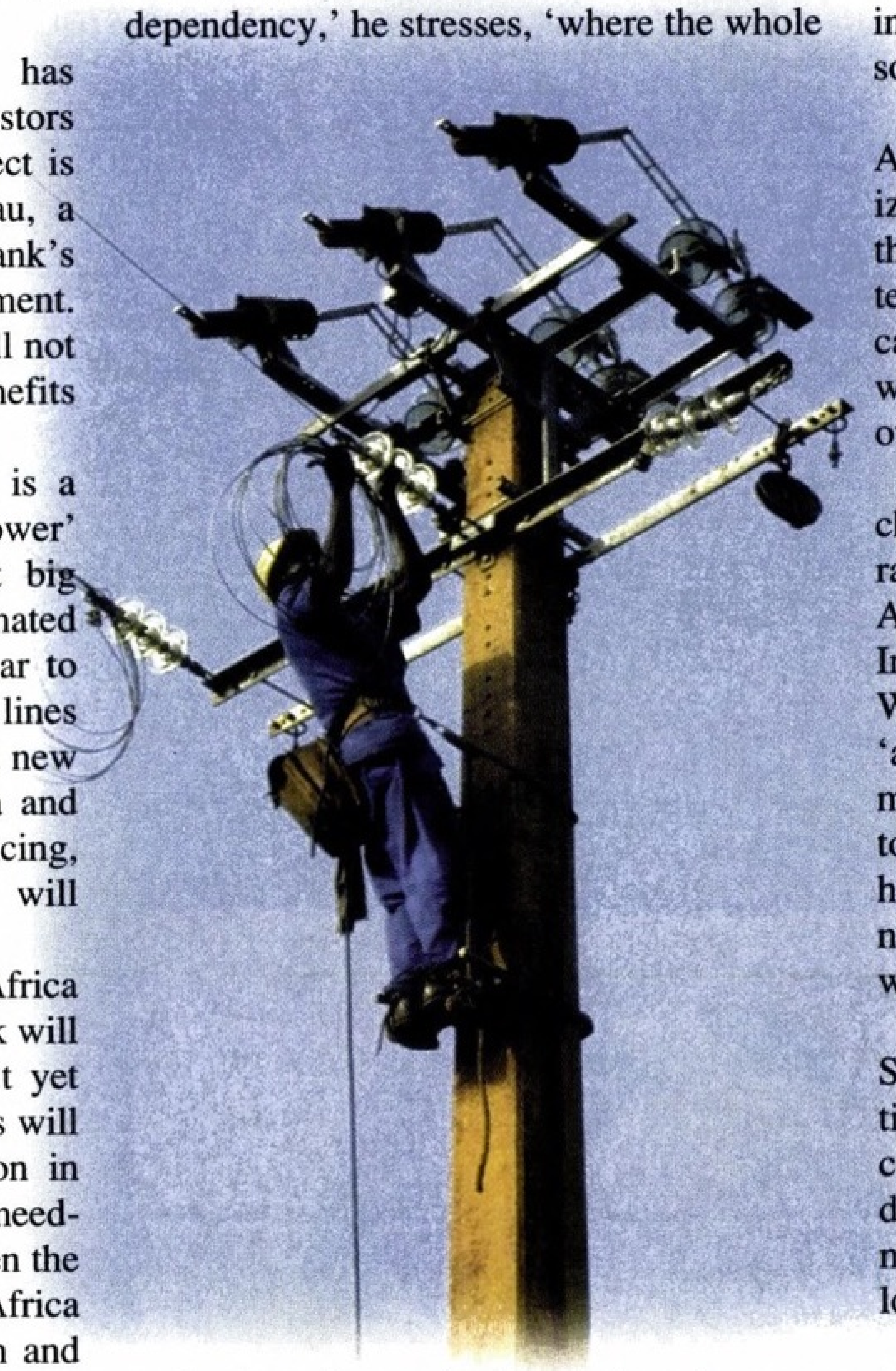
The giant US-based company has approached a number of major investors including the World Bank. 'The project is still evolving,' says Henri Bretaudeau, a public relations officer with the Bank's Industry and Energy Department. Bretaudeau insists the World Bank will not support the project unless it benefits African countries.

According to AT&T Africa One is a development project which will 'empower' all Africans and save the continent big money. The company says the estimated $250 million Africans spend each year to use European telecommunications lines would be 'reduced substantially'. And new services such as standard voice, data and facsimile services, video, teleconferencing, telemarketing and electronic mail will attract new business.

AT&T's Technical Director for Africa One, David Ross, is confident the Bank will back the project though 'they haven't yet identified exactly what their conditions will be'. Ross estimates $600-$800 million in loans to African governments will be needed before the scheme can proceed. Even the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) concludes that 'information and communication technologies can no longer be seen as a luxury for the élite but as an absolute necessity for the masses'.

Others are not so sure. The continent is already saddled with a crippling debt load and critics say the last thing Africans need is another $800 million added to the tab. From 1990-93 sub-Saharan African countries paid $13.4 billion annually to their external creditors – more than their combined spending on health and education. And in 1994 alone the continent's debt burden increased another 3.2 per cent to $312 billion.

African development expert Paul Idahosa from Canada's York University worries that Africa One will turn into an 'ongoing contract' that will yield millions for AT&T. With a limited pool of resources and expertise, Idahosa says, Africans will be restricted to playing minimal roles in the supervision and upkeep of the technology despite AT&T claims to the contrary. 'You create a systemic dependency,' he stresses, 'where the whole technology is run by North Americans or Europeans to the exclusion of Africans'.


JØRGEN SCHYTTE / STILL PICTURES

The ability of African governments to invest in the sophisticated *internal* infrastructure needed to link to the *external* lines – thereby making a technology like the Internet accessible to all – is questionable. A 1992 UN report estimates 30 to 40 per cent of African telephones are out of service at any one time. Outside of major urban areas the quality of transmission lines drops dramatically. Many African countries also have unpredictable power supplies. Data can be lost when computers are suddenly cut off and power surges can destroy equipment.

According to Kerry Gallivan of SatelLife, a non-profit organization that has set up a computer-linked health network throughout Africa, the rainy season poses a unique problem. 'Lightning is the number one killer of computers and modems in Africa,' admits Gallivan. 'There is little insulation and the quality of wiring is poor so power surges travel a lot further.'

At a recent meeting of the Regional African Satellite Communications Organization delegates expressed concern about the millions needed to set up a satellite system. If African governments purchase capacity on the Africa One fibre-optic cable will they have the resources to develop their own domestic networks as well?

This dilemma is typical of aid that is channelled into large-scale infrastructure rather than local forms of development. According to Pat Adams of Probe International (a long-time critic of the World Bank) most Bank projects have been 'abysmal failures'. Rather than admit its mistakes the World Bank attributed failures to an 'underdeveloped infrastructure' in host countries. Idahosa suggests the Bank now sees building up infrastructure as the way to propel market reforms.

In the meantime initiatives like SatelLife which emphasize telecommunication networks linking regions across the continent may be a better use of scarce domestic resources. Although the technology may not be cutting edge it does support local African development.

Since the 1980s SatelLife has been setting up networks using satellites and local telephone lines to connect health workers to colleagues around the world. Situated in 20 African countries SatelLife relies heavily on e-mail to do the job. 'That's our most effective tool,' says Gallivan. We can do up to 75 per cent of what we need to using simple e-mail.' ■

Cathy Majtenyi and **Michele Fleet** are journalists based in Toronto.

Minding the machines: a worker keeps tabs on computers in the de-inking control room of a newsprint mill.

CEPU (CANADA)

Automatic unemployment

Computers are saving labour – by doing away with jobs. **Julie White** reports on the impact of technological change on employment in the Canadian pulp and paper industry.

GARY lives in small-town southern Ontario, in a fertile region of peach trees and grape vines just a 30-minute drive from Niagara Falls. For 22 years he's worked at the same local newsprint mill.

Like many paper workers he started work at the mill before graduating from high school. There had always been lots of work in the mill and on-the-job training and years of service were more important than formal education. So why delay?

After 22 years you might think Gary would be in a secure, top-level position. But it hasn't worked out that way. Over the last 20 years new technology has dramatically altered work in the paper industry. The very Canadian sight of logs rushing downstream in the spring to pulp and paper mills has disappeared because newsprint is no longer produced from logs. Instead wood chips are trucked in to be pulped at high pressure and old newspapers are fed through a de-inking process. The system is different, the equipment to do it is different and the operations are computerized. Workers who once did strenuous manual labour picking wood for the grinders now sit at computer terminals. And there are far fewer of them. At Gary's mill the workforce has declined from 750 in 1980 to only 240 today. Yet, with a third the number of workers the mill churns out double the newsprint.

The first blow came in 1981 when the new equipment was introduced at the mill. 'There were about 350 people on the lay-off list,' Gary remembers. 'And I was 52 down from the top. I wasn't supposed to have a job. Period. I was married and had a son. I was so worried I sold my house and moved in with my in-laws.'

Faced with major lay-offs, the union negotiated an early retirement plan for older workers and a shorter work week for everyone – both designed to save jobs. Ultimately 100 workers were axed. But with nine years of service Gary had just enough seniority to hang on.

Traditional wisdom has it that once a factory has been 'modernized' and the new machinery is in place the jobs of the remaining workers will at least be secure. Security for the company translates into secure jobs for the workers. Not this time. In Gary's mill, as in other mills across the country, new technology continued to be introduced and more jobs slashed.

In the years since 1981 Gary has worked either in the general labour pool (where he started in 1974) or in the newly-created 'departmental pools,' still filling in for workers but in specific departments. In 1993 he got a regular job in the woodroom. 'Somebody retired finally and I got a steady job.' It lasted just six months before another round of cutbacks. He's now working as a 'spare' again moving to different shifts as necessary. The hours are irregular and the jobs unpredictable. 'Tonight and tomorrow night I'm on the wrap line at midnight. The next day I have to go to the labour pool for an afternoon shift, then Thursday, Friday and Saturday I'm on days in the woodroom.'

Gary is one of thousands of pulp and paper workers across Canada whose lives have been turned upside down by computerization over the last two decades. From 1975 to 1995 more than 20,000 jobs disappeared in the industry as the total workforce fell by a quarter from 84,000 to 63,000.

But there is another side to the story. Business people say technological change will mean fewer but better jobs. So what about the high-skilled, high-paid, interesting computer jobs that at least replaced the boring, physical labour of picking wood eight hours a day?

Jim also works in the Donahue paper mill, the same one as Gary. He is the number one operator in the flotation de-inking department where old newspapers and magazines are recycled into pulp – 80 per cent of the content of the newsprint produced at the mill now comes from this source of pulp. Jim sits in front of four computer screens, controlling de-inking equipment that cost $42 million to install. If anyone at the mill is secure, he is. He's well paid, earning $24 an hour or about $50,000 a year.

Jim's been at the mill for 24 years and started work in the flotation de-inking process when it opened in 1987. Although he found training for the job 'exciting' and a 'challenge' he has been in the job now for almost ten years and it has become routine. The computers have alarms that alert the operators to problems so it is often unnecessary even to watch the screens.

'The novelty has worn off,' Jim admits. 'At first you had to figure everything out, but once you've figured it out the computer does 99 per cent of the work. Now it's just tedious and boring. You're just responding where it can't handle it, a few breakdowns. Some nights there is just nothing to do.'

Jim can't move to another job: with so few operator positions there is nowhere to go. Besides, the operator jobs in different departments are all pretty much the same. 'I'd like to think that I could move but I guess I'm stuck.' Jim is 44 years old and will be in this same job until he retires, at least another 14 years. Many jobs are boring, but it is important to know that the hi-tech, computerized jobs are often no exception.

> *'The novelty has worn off... once you've figured it out the computer does 99 per cent of the work'*

One reason for being bored is that there are only two operators on shift together, usually one in the control room with the computers and one out checking in the plant. During the day other workers and supervisors are around, but on night-shift many hours can be spent entirely alone. Opportunities for socializing are minimal. And with only two co-workers there can be unpleasant tensions. 'You're only two. If you don't get along for eight hours it's going to be a long day and a long week and a long year.'

In paper mills across the country there are fewer workers and smaller crews. Walking through a mill today, you're impressed with the enormous buildings, the huge machinery and – most strikingly – the absence of people.

'Now the departments are smaller you don't have the numbers,' another worker from Jim's mill explained. 'There used to be coffee clubs or get-togethers once a month. We all used to go out on a particular shift and on shut-down days we'd have parties. Now there's not enough people and you haven't got the closeness.'

With fewer workers in the plant there are also more chances for accidents. Jim remembers when his partner was out touring the department, slipped at the presses and caught his hand in the machinery. With his hand mangled and a finger missing, he managed to get to the control room of another department which was nearer than his own. 'He scared the hell out of me that night,' Jim recalls, 'because he could have died up there and I wouldn't have known'.

Over the last 20 years computerization of the pulp and paper industry has sparked a 50-per-cent boom in production with 25-per-cent fewer workers. Our ability to produce more goods with less labour should spell progress and social benefits. It hasn't. Even the workers who still have jobs feel few benefits have flowed their way. As a society we need to do something about it – soon. ■

Julie White works for the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada where she is currently researching options for a reduced work week.

Picking wood in the groundwood department: tough manual work like this is fast disappearing in the modern paper industry.

CEPU (CANADA)

Silicon Valley East

The computer industry is creating jobs in India. But can the subcontinent cope with high tech? **Dilip D'Souza** reports.

Young girls training for work in Bangalore's burgeoning computer business.

JØRGEN SCHYTTE / STILL PICTURES

WHEN I left engineering college, it seems a century ago, I was offered a job with a then fledgling software company called Tata Consultancy Services (TCS). I didn't sign up with the firm. Instead, I flew to the United States a few months later to pursue a graduate degree in Computer Science.

Soon afterwards I was astonished when several of my friends who had joined TCS turned up in the US. They'd been sent abroad as consultants for their American clients. This was a fairly routine thing, this so-called 'bodyshopping'. From the company's point of view it made sense. India had a large supply of qualified engineers and programers and Western companies were happy to off-load software projects to Indian developers since they got the same quality of work for much less money.

This is how the Indian software industry really took flight – by offering skilled software development at knock-down rates. In 1995 the country's software industry had sales of more than $2.2 billion and that sum is growing at more than 40 per cent a year. Half the industry's income is from exports.

Corruption and red tape are rife and real estate prices beyond the reach of ordinary people

The main site of this economic boom has been Bangalore – a once quiet, leafy-green city with a benign climate in the state of Karnataka. Bangalore has almost self-consciously built an image for itself as the city for young, affluent professionals. It's become the first city in India where pubs are accepted places for the white-collar set simply to hang out. There are technical reasons for Bangalore's rise too. After Independence, the Government established several large public sector engineering companies and institutes there: Indian Telephone Industries, Hindustan Machine Tools, the Indian Space Research Organization and others. There are also many good colleges and at least two top-notch post-graduate research institutes.

'Bangalore took off because of the quality of people here and the quality of life,' says Nandan Nilakeni, founder of Infosys Technologies. Infosys is one of Bangalore's largest software companies with sales of more than $28 million last year. It used to be that Infosys would send platoons of software engineers across the Atlantic. No longer. Now most of the work is done in Bangalore via satellite links. The time difference means Indians sort out programing snags which their American clients receive in time for breakfast.

But the situation is changing fast. Indians are now anxious to produce their own software. 'Indian companies have to go up the value chain,' Nandan Nilakeni told me. Infosys is doing just that and hopes to earn 40 per cent of its revenues from its own software sales within four years.

After Indian companies like Infosys decided to locate in Bangalore multinationals were also attracted to the city. Texas Instruments was one of the first big foreign companies to set up shop there, in 1984. It was followed by giants like Digital, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Motorola, Siemens and Groupe Bull. Today, a third of the nearly 300 software firms in the city are multinationals.

Software now employs about 10,000 technically qualified people in Bangalore.

A rosy picture? For some. Software has certainly brought prosperity to thousands of people in India's Garden City. But there is a downside too: municipal services have not kept up with the rapid population growth; city garbage is often uncleared and water is getting scarce. Traffic is a nightmare, public transport hopelessly inadequate. Corruption and red tape are rife and real estate prices beyond the reach of ordinary people.

Critics like ex-Member of Parliament Mrinal Gore think foreign software companies 'may cut down employment in the long run'. India should be thinking about the impact of computers on local employment, according to Ms Gore. 'Will our own industries be able to compete?' she asks. 'Competition is necessary but not at the cost of closing down our own industry.'

But the real problem is that Bangalore has become an island of prosperity in an ocean of endemic poverty. Rushing towards the 21st Century, half the country is illiterate. Six of ten people in our cities live on the streets and in slums, without water and sanitation.

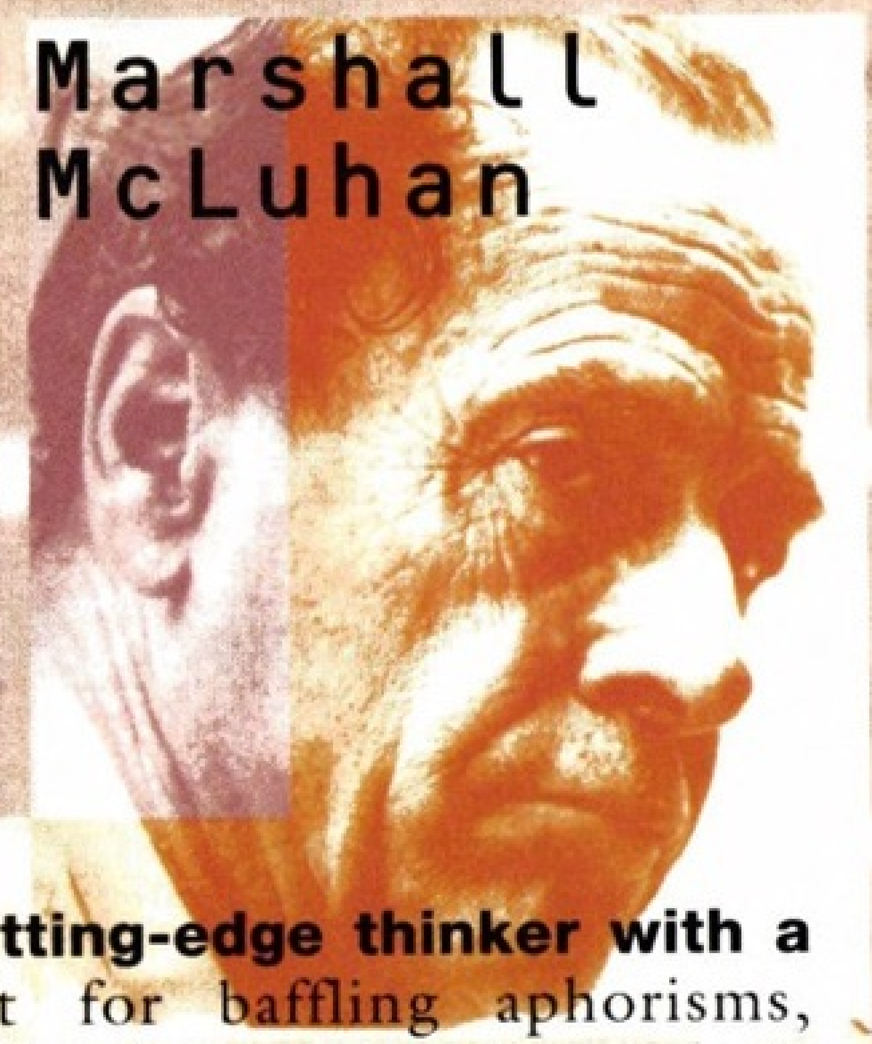
Vivekanandan, a successful 36-year-old engineer at CG Smith Software in Bangalore sums up the dilemma. Seated in his plush offices you could easily be in California. Yet outside the window cattle with blue-tinted horns browse through piles of garbage. While software flits back and forth across the Atlantic, the bank around the corner still uses voluminous paper ledgers. And in the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu, says Vivekanandan, 'my family has to pay three rupees for a pot of water'. ■

Dilip D'Souza is a journalist with Sanctuary Features Service in Bombay.

Techno-seers

Thumbnail summaries of the views of some brave thinkers who've dared to question the juggernaut of technology

Marshall McLuhan



MANUEL BIDERMANAS / CAMERA PRESS

A cutting-edge thinker with a talent for baffling aphorisms, McLuhan became a media celebrity and cult intellectual in the tumultuous 1960s. At his most optimistic McLuhan believed that modern information technologies would create a 'global village', breaking down barriers of language and distance. He spoke of electronic technologies as extensions of human consciousness and preached 'the medium is the message'. By which he meant that technologies shape social and political environments and structure human relationships. But he also feared the loss of democratic control over technological choice and warned of humans becoming 'servo-mechanisms' of a technology which is controlled by the few at the expense of the many.

Before his death in 1980 his views became more sombre and he warned that technology was spinning out of control. 'Excessive speed of change isolates already fragmented individuals... At the speed of light man (sic) has neither goals, objectives, nor private identity. He (sic) is an item in the data bank – software only, easily forgotten – and deeply resentful.'

Reading: *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man,* McGraw-Hill, New York, 1964.

Mahatma Gandhi

Known as the father of Indian independence Mahatma Gandhi was also an astute critic of the impact of industrial technology on employment. His analysis grew first-hand from the crushing poverty of rural life in India which he believed was worsened by the import of cheap, machine-produced fabric from British textile mills. In fact millions of spinners and weavers lost their jobs when Britain flooded the subcontinent with Lancashire cotton goods and restricted the export of textile machinery to India.

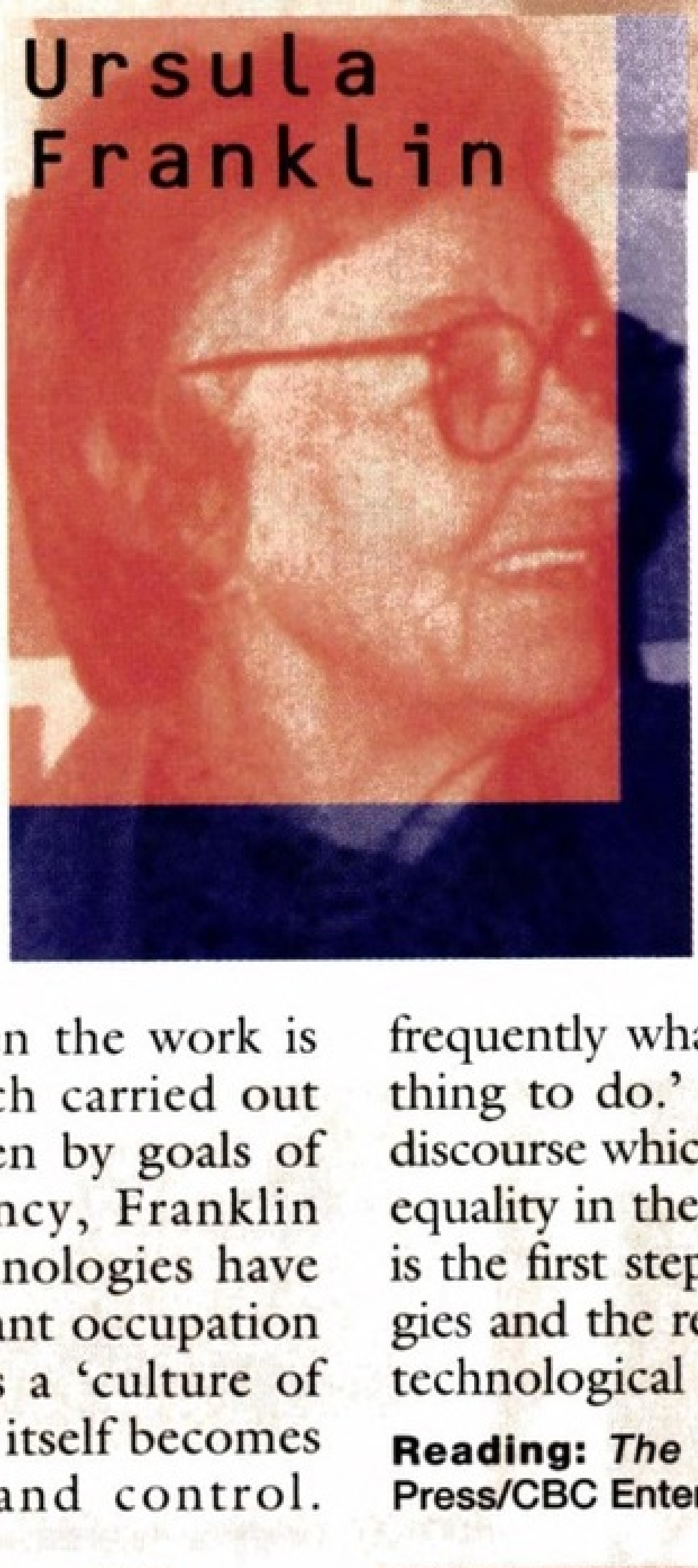
Modern technology, Gandhi believed, would lead to a concentration of wealth and power and a further marginalization of the poor. In the 1920s he adopted the *charkha* or traditional Indian spinning wheel as the symbol of his campaign against the technology which had destroyed the lives of millions of his compatriots.

'It is machinery that has impoverished India,' he wrote. 'By reproducing Manchester in India we shall keep our money at the price of our blood... How can a country with millions of living machines afford to have a machine which will displace the labour of millions?'

His model of de-centralized development and village-level democracy was scorned by critics as reactionary nonsense in the face of necessary modernization. Gandhi was unapologetic: 'In so far as we have made the modern materialistic craze our goal, so far we are going downhill in the path of progress.'

Reading: *Mahatma Gandhi and his Apostles,* Ved Mehta, Viking, New York, 1977 and *Gandhi: A Memoir,* William L Shirer, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1979.

Ursula Franklin

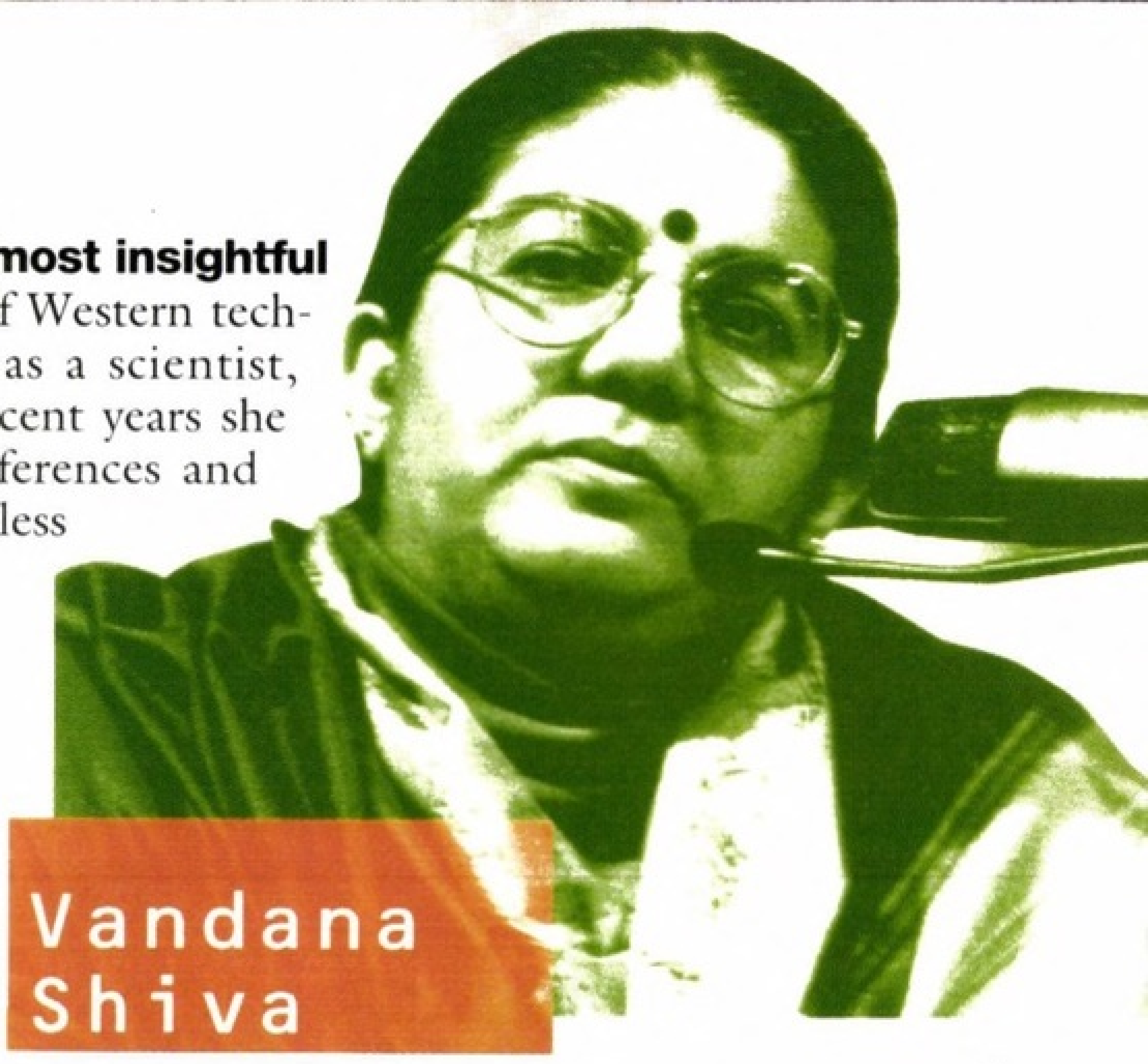


A Quaker and Canadian citizen for nearly 50 years, Ursula Franklin is a distinguished professor of physics and one of the country's pre-eminent scientists. She is also an outspoken peace activist and a strong critic of the impact of technology on modern life. Franklin makes a distinction between what she calls 'holistic' technology (when the doer is in control of the work process) and 'prescriptive' technology (when the work is divided into specific steps each carried out by separate individuals). Driven by goals of profit and economic efficiency, Franklin argues that 'prescriptive' technologies have taken over the world 'like a giant occupation force'. The result, she says, is a 'culture of compliance' where technology itself becomes an agent of social order and control.

'Prescriptive technologies,' she writes, 'eliminate the occasions for decision-making and judgement in general and especially for the making of *principled* decisions. Any goal of the technology is incorporated *a priori* in the design and is not negotiable.'

It has become 'sacrilege', she says, to question the fundamental value of technologies and their products. 'All too frequently what is efficient is seen as the right thing to do.' Instead she argues for a public discourse which focuses on 'justice, fairness and equality in the global sense'. This, she believes, is the first step towards 'redemptive' technologies and the re-introduction of people into the technological decision-making process.

Reading: *The Real World of Technology,* Anansi Press/CBC Enterprises, Toronto, 1990.



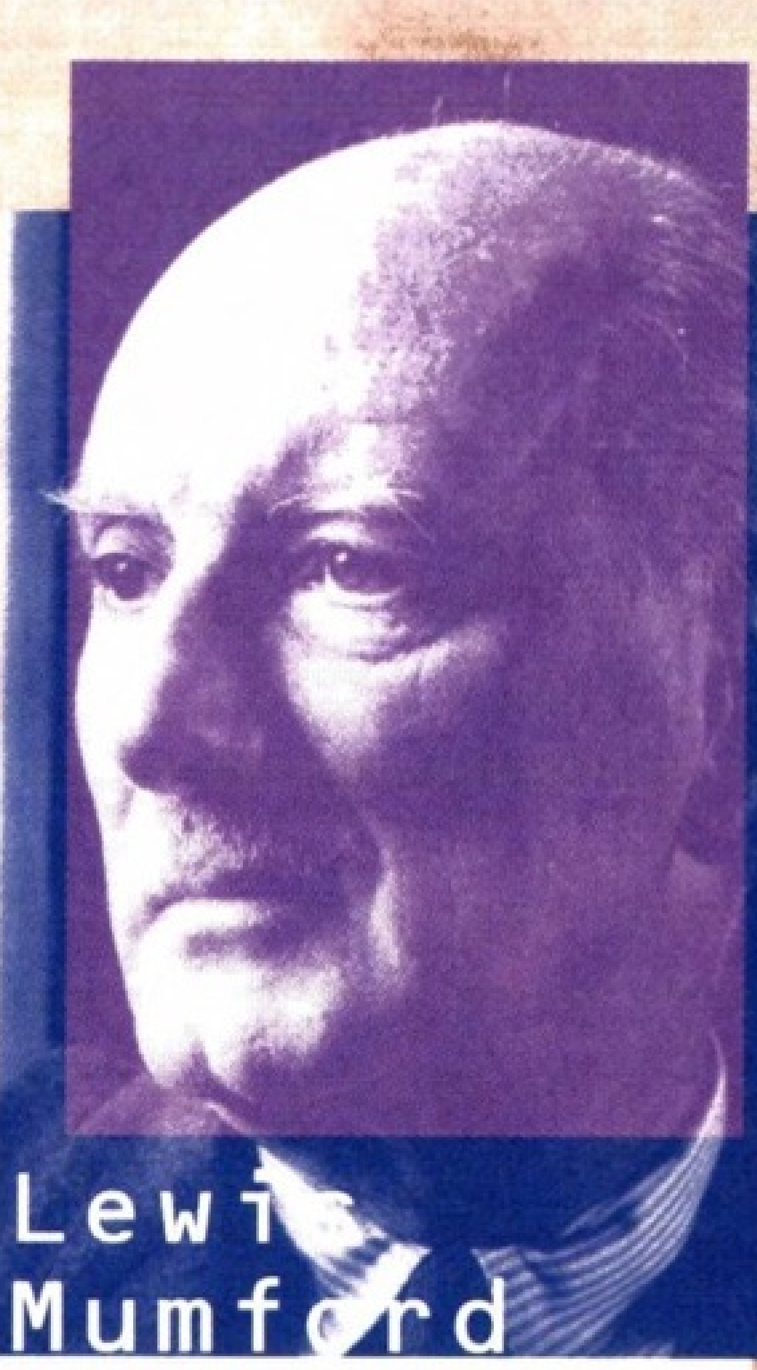
JUDY JANDA / IMPACT VISUALS

Vandana Shiva is one of India's most insightful minds and a sharp and lucid critic of Western technology. She first made her mark as a scientist, author and teacher. However, in recent years she has become a familiar sight at conferences and workshops around the globe – a tireless activist, using whatever platform she can to praise passionately traditional cultures and indigenous technologies. At the same time she is fiercely critical of Western scientific traditions and the technology that has sprung from that research. She accuses Western science of being both smug and arrogant in its self-assurance. And short-sighted in its rejection of traditional knowledge and techniques.

As an alternative to a Western-imposed 'monoculture of the mind' she calls for an 'insurrection of subjugated knowledge' and a rejection of technologies which undermine and worsen the human condition.

'Since dominant knowledge is deeply wedded to "economism", it is unrelated to human needs,' she states. 'It leaves out a plurality of paths to knowing nature and the universe... 90 per cent of such production of knowledge could be stopped without any risk of human deprivation.'

Reading: *Monocultures of the Mind,* Zed Books, London, 1993.



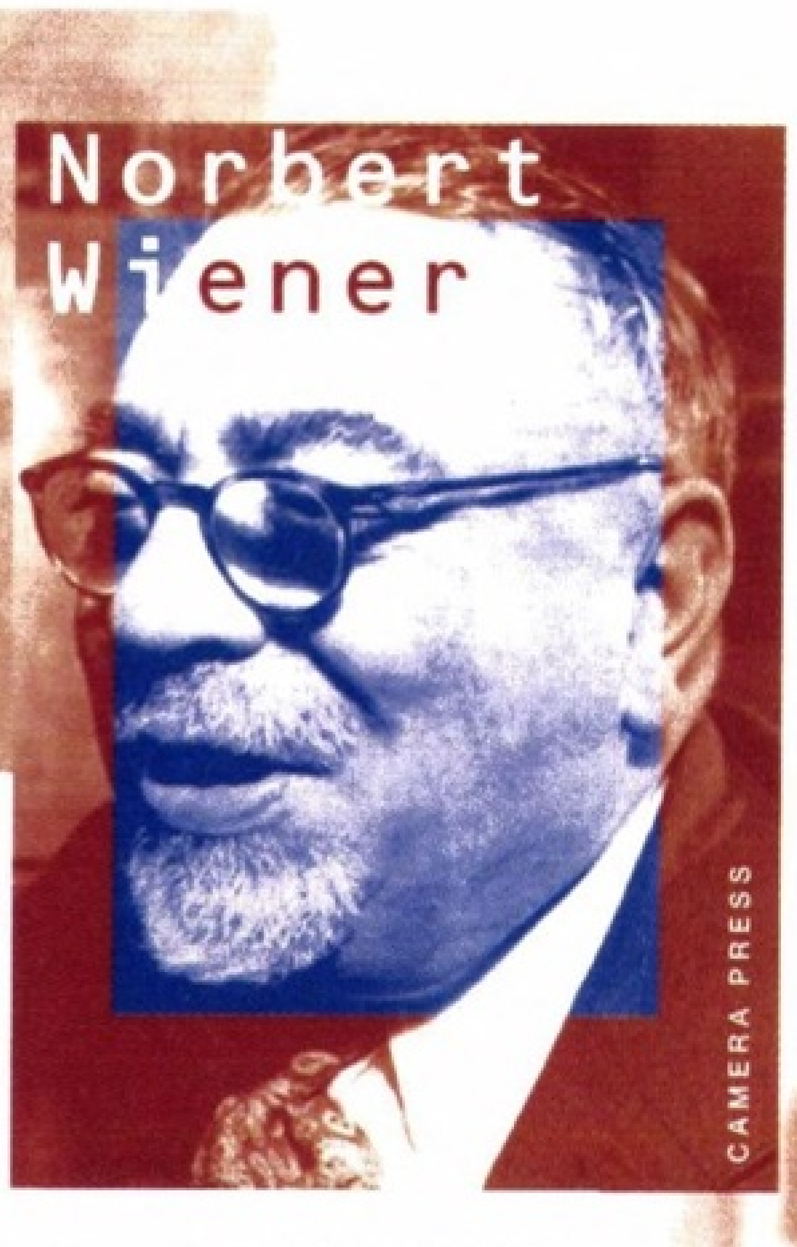
DAVID SIM / CAMERA PRESS

One of the great public intellectuals of the twentieth century, the sharp-eyed Mumford was an indefatigable critic of modern technological society. Largely self-taught, he wrote more than 30 books and authored a column on urban life for the *New Yorker* for 63 years. Following in the footsteps of the great humanist philosophers Mumford challenged the notion that technological advances equal human progress. In *The Myth of the Machine* he described the domination of society by a small, powerful élite who use modern technologies to centralize social control.

Mumford called the endless stream of consumer goods produced by technological society a 'magnificent bribe' which masks our understanding of the real human impact of technological change. 'The belief in technological progress as a good in itself,' he wrote, 'will replace all other conceptions of desirable human destiny'.

Mumford warned that both individual freedom and community will be submerged by the technical imperative – what he called the 'mega-machine'. To operate 'correctly and efficiently,' he wrote, the mega-machine needs 'a concentration of economic and political power, instantaneous communication and a system of information storage capable of keeping track of every event – this new invention [the computer] alone should suffice'. And the final purpose of life under this new order? 'To furnish and process an endless quantity of data, in order to expand the role and ensure the domination of the power system.'

Reading: *Technics and Human Development* and *The Pentagon of Power,* Vols 1 and 2 of *The Myth of the Machine*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1967 and 1970.



CAMERA PRESS

And you thought cybernetics was nifty nineties-speak. Not so. The American mathematician Norbert Wiener first coined the term back in 1948. Two years later he published *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* in which he used the used the word *cybernation* to describe the future era of computer-assisted industrial production.

Although Wiener's work boosted both computer science and artificial-intelligence research he himself was pessimistic (and eerily accurate) about the uses to which new technology would be put. He feared its use both by the military and by profit-conscious industrialists who would use the technology to lay off workers and increase production. Wiener wrote that the new technology would 'play no favorites between manual labor and white-collar labor' and would lead to 'an unemployment situation in comparison with which... even the Depression of the 1930s will seem a pleasant joke'.

Reading: *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society,* Houghton-Mifflin, Boston, MA, 1950.

BACKGROUND PHOTO: CAMERA PRESS

Ned Ludd live!

Kirkpatrick Sale takes us to the set of one of America's most popular late-night TV talk shows.

GOOD evening everyone and welcome to *Nightline*. My name is Ted Cobble and tonight we have a very special guest made possible through the miracle of modern science. I'm sure you have all heard by now about that man found frozen in Antarctica a few months ago and how, in one of the most remarkable achievements of cryogenics, scientists have actually restored that long-frozen body to life.

I can now tell you that ABC News has learned that the man was actually shipped out to Australia from England as a criminal nearly 200 years ago on a ship that apparently lost its way in the Tasman Sea. It was swept into the Wilkes Land glacier of Antarctica and there he was frozen alive.

We have also learned that this man was no ordinary criminal in England – his name was Edward Ludd. He often went by the nickname 'Ned' and it was he who led that short-lived but potent movement of the nineteenth century known as Luddism – you know, those people who went around smashing machines and burning factories to protest against progress and technology and the Industrial Revolution.

I can also tell you tonight that ABC News has flown Edward Ludd to New York. And for the past two weeks he has been our guest while we have shown him in various ways the wonders of our modern life. With him tonight we are going to explore a controversial topic a lot of you are concerned about – technology, its impact on our lives and its meaning for our society.

But first, Ned, maybe you could give us a few words of background. What was it like when you led that first revolt?

TADEUSZ MAJEWSKI / 3 IN A BOX

Ned Ludd Well I will try, Mr Cobbett, since you ask. You see, that was back in 1811-12, when things were very bad in England for us workers in the textile trades. Harvests were bad, wages were down. And worst of all the masters began introducing certain new machinery by which one man could do the work of six. We could not get work. We saw our children starving and our workmates wasting away and it was a pain more than we could endure. We asked the masters for help, but they refused. We asked the Parliament, but they too refused. We asked the King, who was mad you know, and his silly son the Prince Regent, probably just as mad, and they too refused. What could we do?

So some of the lads, after a pint or two, decided to take matters into their own hands, form a little army and smash the hated machinery.

TC An army, Ned? Whatever were you fighting against? Progress?

NL No sir, we were fighting the masters, the weaving magnates, don't you see? They were the ones that put in the new machinery, the ones doing us out of our rightful jobs.

So we would march out at night, faces covered or blackened, brandishing guns and hammers and torches. And we broke those machines wherever we could find them. Sometimes we set fire to the whole damned place and then went off home to bed as tidy as you please before the constables could come.

We wanted the masters to see how desperate we were and to do away with that machinery and give us back our jobs. We smashed at least 1,300 machines in Nottinghamshire, 500 in Yorkshire, another 500 in Lancashire – it was quite a time, Mr Cobbett, let me tell you. And we attacked 20 or more factories and half a dozen of them we pretty well destroyed.

TC And now tell our viewers what finally happened to you Luddites. I think I am fairly safe in saying that you didn't win.

NL Right enough, sir. No, we didn't win. The masters went to the Government, the Government went to the army and the army moved in near 15,000 troops. And soon enough they broke the back of the movement. They murdered 50 of us in cold blood, strung up two dozen on the gallows, shipped off another three dozen to Australia – including me as you know – and jailed God knows how many.

But you know we didn't lose either, Mr Cobbett. The –

TC That's 'Cobble', Ned.

NL The Luddite idea has lasted since that time. It has flourished wherever technology has destroyed jobs, ruined lives and torn up communities. Whenever and wherever machinery is unrestrained and technology is in the saddle riding people, the Luddites will always be there raising the same banner we lifted 200 years ago.

TC Well, thank you, Ned, very nicely put. Ah, by the way, it's 'Cobble', my name's 'Cobble', as in cobblestone. Tell us –

NL Oh, I'm terribly sorry, sir. You know we had a fellow back... back when I was first alive, a William Cobbett. A real champion of the working man he was, a man whose paper I read almost every week of my life, a journalist type, and I just thought you must have the same name. 'Cobble,' is it?

TC Yes, Cobble please. Now tell us, Ned, with that very interesting background, what you have to say about our technology today?

NI Well, right off, Mr Cobble, I have to say that I haven't seen all that much of your technology first-hand.

TC Yes, I understand. But you've spent these last two weeks in our library learning a lot about it, haven't you, Ned? The computers, the microchips, the Internet, all the wonderful things we've got now – the credit cards and satellites and cell-phones and faxes and CAT-scans and ATMs.

NL I beg your pardon, the whats?

TC Sorry, the automatic teller machines, those things at the bank.

NL Oh, where you just put in a card and money pours out. Yes, I remember that. One solution to poverty, I should think.

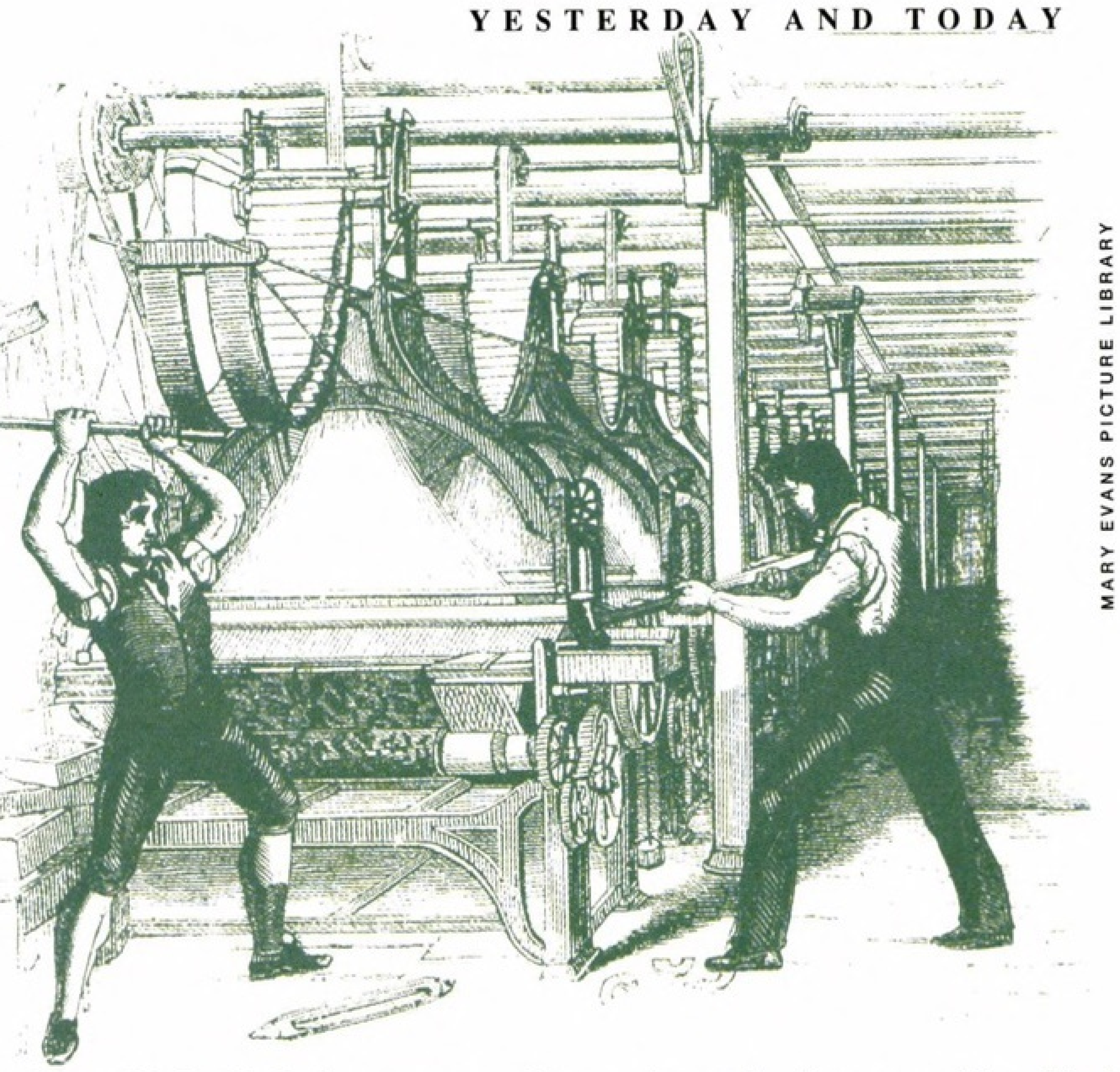
TC Anyway, we did give you a lot of information about all our wonderful inventions and I'm curious to know your reaction, Ned.

NL I don't wish to seem rude, Mr Cobbett, you being...

TC Cobble.

NL Mr Cobble. You being a nice young fellow and all but I have to say I rather find a dark side to all these thingamajigs you find so wonderful. As the poet fellow Wordsworth said, back in my time – he said about all those factories and all: 'I grieve when on the darker side of this great change I look.' And I am obliged to tell you, sir, that I feel rather the same way about all the, as you say, technology – what we called 'machinery'. From what I know, from all you've showed me, I'm afraid I too have to grieve.

TC Well now grieving seems rather strange, doesn't it Ned? Just look at what we've got now. The medicines to heal people and let them live longer, the devices that permit people to communicate anywhere in the world, the chemicals available to make crops healthy and resistant – why I



MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

If I had a hammer: Ned Ludd's supporters have a go at the 'hated machinery'.

could go on all night. I wouldn't think that would make you grieve.

NL Ah yes, Mr Cobbett, but that's not quite the point. I suppose some of those things must be pretty magnificent, but is anybody reckoning the cost of it all? I don't mean the money, though I know it must be an enormous amount. No, sir, I mean the cost in much broader terms. Let's say 200,000 tons of poisonous wastes created every year by the manufacture of those computer chip things; the 25 million on-the-job injuries every year to those who use them; the five million jobs made more routinized and mindless by what you call 'data processing'; the fears and insecurities created by widespread change so shattering that your *Newsweek* magazine says – I have it here – 'it's outstripping our capacity to cope'; the damage to your natural world from the unimaginably powerful and efficient machines of exploitation your computers now run. Well sir, I could go on, like you, all night. But permit me to concentrate not on those costs but on one single effect of your 'computer revolution' dear to my Luddite heart: jobs.

TC All right Ned, not too long, though. What about jobs?

NL I'm just judging from the facts and figures you've given me, Mr Cobbett. But since 1979 when your computer revolution really began, 47 million jobs have been lost in your American factories and offices. Your own government says so. That is, put quite simply, a tragedy in a workforce of 120 million. Oh, I know what you're about to say, Mr Cobbett. Maybe they weren't *all* lost to technology, maybe it was things such as jobs moving to other countries. I can only say in reply that your *New York Times* seems to think it was mostly technology and you can certainly prove that in manufacturing where we know those robot thingamajigs replaced almost half the jobs in the factories.

But this should not even be a matter of contention, sir. We knew it back then: 'labor-saving machinery', they called it and the masters were damned proud of it. Well yes, it saved labor. Or rather took it away from men and gave it to steam engines and the like. Well that is what the computer does, what it is supposed to do, why they invented it and why the masters are using it. It saves them money because they don't have to pay humans and put up with all the expenses humans cause. That's why you've had this 'computer revolution' – because the masters make money from it.

I know you're busting to get in here, Mr Cobbett, but just hear me out, sir. I said 47 million jobs lost. Think of it, sir – 47 million *people*. Think of what happened to their *lives*. Think of the misery, the heartbreak. Think of the mental toll, the physical anguish, the spiritual pain. Oh, yes, it's true that some of them, 15 million I think it was, eventually got new jobs. But generally the new ones weren't as good as the old, didn't pay as much, had no 'benefits', no security. They were what people sometimes call 'disposable jobs'. I am talking about people's lives, Mr Cobbett, *lives*. Why does no-one pay attention to that?

TC Well now, Ned. It isn't that we don't pay attention. We have plenty of government programs for just that sort of thing. And of course we in the media are paying attention all the time. We had a *Nightline* segment on unemployment just last year.

NL Well that's a good thing, sir, because according to all I read it will only get worse. Your Carnegie Institute, I will remind you, has predicted that six million more factory and 38 million office jobs will be eliminated *by technology* in the next decade or so. That's 44 million *more* jobs, sir, 44 million lives.

TC I'm afraid you're painting a very dark picture here, Ned. And I can't believe it jibes with what most of our viewers experience in their lives. There's a great deal of prosperity in this country. The long recession is over, the economy is by all accounts on the upswing and the unemployment figures are at one of the lowest points ever. I can't say that I see much support for your picture of economic misery.

NL I beg you, sir, I am not making this up. I am quoting your own statistics. I do not deny there is great richness in this society. All that I am saying is that there is a dark side. An *ignored* side. And it's this: five per cent of your people own 90 per cent of your wealth, the top 20 per cent earn nearly half of all income. And the disparity between rich and poor, shameful to begin with, has only got worse since the 'computer revolution' began. And gets worse each passing year. The dark side of your employment is this: eight million people are officially unemployed, 36 million are said to be discouraged from looking for work, 46 million are in dead-end jobs without hope. Add in 37 million people below what you call the 'poverty line' and that is, by my figuring, sir, 126 million people. And you only have 250 million or somesuch in your whole United States. It pains me to say it, Mr Cobbett. But for a nation as wealthy as yours to have produced misery, poverty, hopelessness, heartache and affliction on this scale seems to me to be a crime against humanity, compared to which there is only one crime more heinous.

And that, sir, is the crime that most people in your country are able somehow to sleepwalk through their lives numbed by shallow entertainments and ridiculous sporting events and other plentiful opiates, oblivious to it all.

TC Well I must say your views are very frank, Ned. And we all appreciate hearing them. I'm afraid, though, that's all the time we have. I do want to thank you, Mr Edward Ludd, for your unusual views and I know our viewers will want to have you back again in the future. This is Ted Cobbett – no, dammit, Cobble – saying good-night to you all. Tune in tomorrow. ■

Kirkpatrick Sale is the author of *Rebels Against the Future* and a regular contributor to the **NI**.

Lúcio Flavio Pinto

A journalist in Amazonia who can't believe the stars are made of plastic talks to **David Ransom**

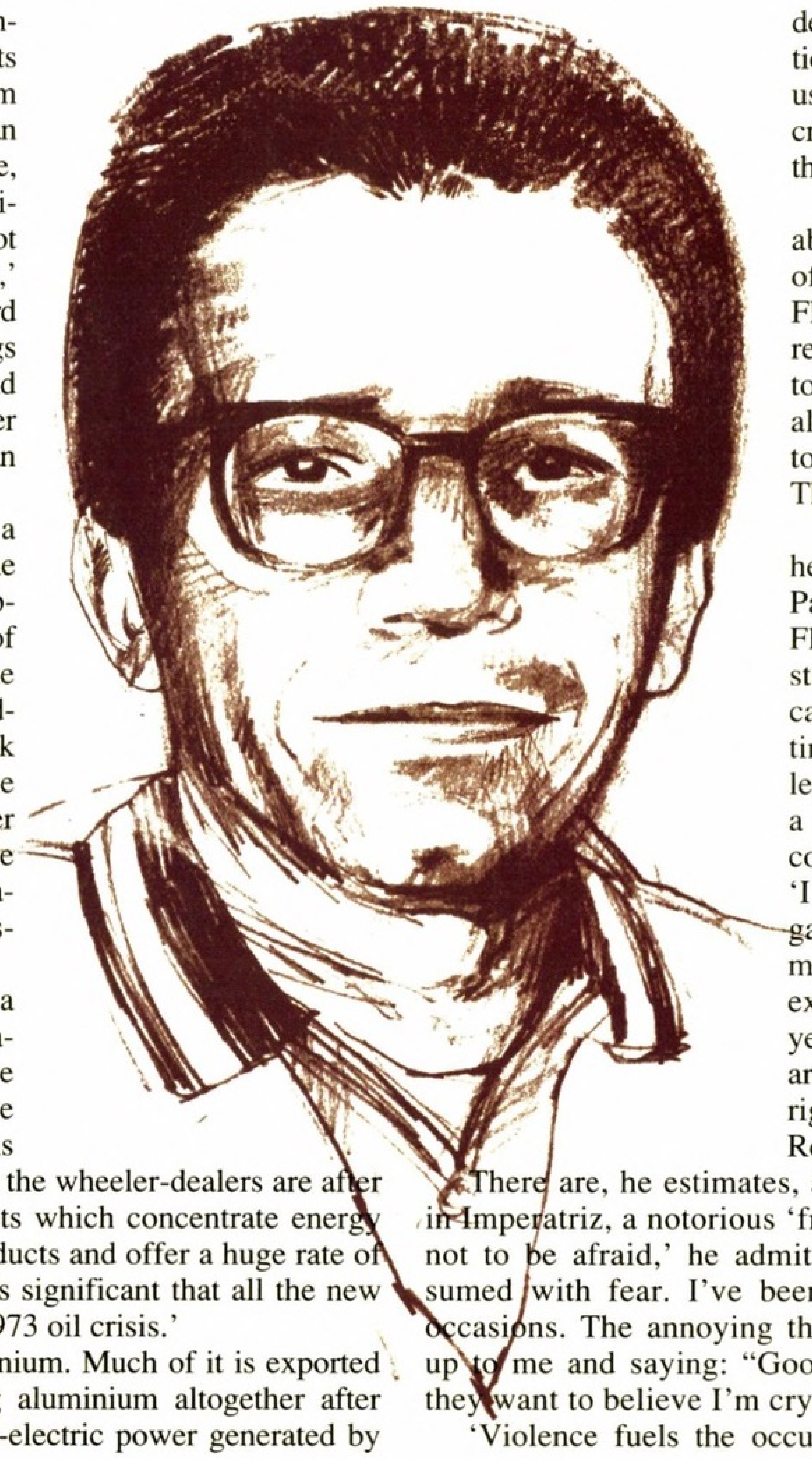


ILLUSTRATION BY ALAN HUGHES

LUCIO FLAVIO PINTO somehow conjures a stream of books, reports and investigative journalism from an information desert in Brazilian Amazonia. He is a diminutive, bespectacled man with a forensic attitude and a benign expression that cannot conceal his underlying despair. 'That,' he says, 'really is the appropriate word to express my fundamental feelings about the place. In 30 years of living and working here, I can say that I have never known a single year that was better than the one before.'

Since 1987 he has been circulating a newsletter, *Jornal Pessoal* ('The Personal Paper'), to some 2,000 subscribers in and around the city of Belém, the capital of Pará state on the Amazon estuary. The *Jornal* is modelled on *IF Stone's Weekly* that shook up a complacent Washington DC in the 1950s and 1960s. Pinto's newsletter runs on a shoestring and is one of the few authoritative sources on the mega-scams that have, he maintains, dispossessed generations of Amazonians.

Such schemes 'arrive as if in a black box, to which the local population has no means of access. This is the irony – everything is done in the name of Amazonia, but the Amazonians themselves are mere ornaments. What the wheeler-dealers are after is energy-intensive industries, products which concentrate energy in themselves, transmit it to other products and offer a huge rate of profit to the buyer, not the sellers. It's significant that all the new big projects were launched after the 1973 oil crisis.'

The biggest to date involves aluminium. Much of it is exported to Japan – which stopped producing aluminium altogether after 1973 – using vast quantities of hydro-electric power generated by dams that have devastated swathes of rainforest the size of small countries. Pará state has the largest aluminium smelter in the world and as a result is the fifth-biggest consumer of energy in Brazil, while 40 per cent of the local population has no access to electricity at all.

> ***This is the irony – everything is done in the name of Amazonia, but the Amazonians themselves are mere ornaments***

Copper, gold, manganese, iron – the list of natural resources scoured from Amazonia gets longer and longer. Ever-grander hi-tech schemes follow one upon the other. In 1993 the Brazilian Government approved a multi-billion-dollar contract with the US-based Raytheon arms manufacturer – parent to the Patriot missile – for the SIVAM electronic surveillance and air-traffic-control system. President Clinton wrote twice to the Brazilian Government personally commending Raytheon's bid, which was accepted without public tender.

'In just five years,' says Flavio Pinto, '20 times more will have been spent on SIVAM than the entire public budget for the whole region. Our only function, as the people who live here, is to repay the debt. I've often asked myself the question: what on earth is it for? I can see no use for it at all. It simply seems to be crazy. But the history of development in the Amazon is a Pandora's Box of folly.'

And, as the fickle gaze of fashionable concern wanders, the deforestation of Amazonia continues. Last year Flavio Pinto saw Brazilian hardwoods ready for export from the port of Belém to Malaysia, where the rainforests have already been destroyed. 'I expected not to see this before the year 2000. They're well ahead of schedule.'

In Amazonia there is a price on the head of the outspoken. Nine years ago Paulo Fonteras, a personal friend of Flavio Pinto's and a member of the state congress who worked as an advocate for landless people, was shot three times in the head as he sat, cross-legged, smoking a cigarette in his car at a gas station near Belém. 'This was a contract execution,' says Flavio Pinto. 'I spent the next three months investigating the murder, discovering who the murderers were, who hired them, and I exposed their names publicly. Nine years later they have still not been arrested. In terms of civil and political rights we are behind even the French Revolution in Amazonia.'

There are, he estimates, at least 500 killers available for hire in Imperatriz, a notorious 'frontier' town inland. 'It's impossible not to be afraid,' he admits, 'and it's difficult not to be consumed with fear. I've been threatened with death on several occasions. The annoying thing is that my friends keep coming up to me and saying: "Good lord! You're still alive!" Perhaps they want to believe I'm crying wolf.

'Violence fuels the occupation of Amazonia. There are two kinds of violence: death and money. Frankly, I don't know which is worse: to lose a personal friend, or to lose generations of future possibilities with the destruction of the region. People say I'm pessimistic. I'd prefer to be optimistic. I refuse to accept that destiny is written in the stars, and the stars are made of plastic.

'As a journalist I just like to tell true stories. I'm going to try to achieve something equal to *IF Stone's Weekly*. Even if I don't, at least I'll know there was another crazy guy out there doing it before me. The Soviet film-maker Sergei Eisenstein wrote his *Immoral Memoirs* because he went against the established morality of his time. This is something that I want to do with my newsletter – to probe established morality. My immorality is to want an Amazonia for those who live there.' ■

***Jornal Pessoal* can be contacted and subscribed to at Rua Benjamin Constant 845/203, 66.053-040 Belém, Brazil, tel: +55 91 223 7690.**

Reviews

books

Return of the Indian

by **Philip Wearne**

Cassell/Latin America Bureau (ISBN 0-304-33458-8)

500 Nations

by **Alvin M Josephy Jr**

Pimlico (ISBN 0-7126-7421-7)

OTHER PEOPLE HAVE always felt free to impose upon the indigenous peoples of the Americas more or less whatever took their fancy at the time. Five centuries ago, greed for gold was enough to justify unbridled savagery by European adventurers who used the term 'Indian' to describe the 2,000 distinct peoples and cultures they encountered. Today, the 800 peoples that remain find themselves portrayed as the guardians of ecological wisdom, the last remaining reason to believe that it survives at all in the human mind. Meanwhile a more gradual but equally relentless form of genocide continues across the two continents, North and South. In Canada, 90 per cent of the indigenous languages are in decline or endangered. The most remarkable thing is that they have survived at all.

Mexico: Tarahumara woman and child.

With **Return of the Indian** Philip Wearne has rescued us – quite as much as the 'Indians' themselves – from the clutches of anthropologists, missionaries and sentimental hogwash, the muzak of cultural destruction. He has given us an extremely lucid, informative and compelling account of what really matters: how some 40 million indigenous people in the Americas see themselves. What we then discover is their giddying diversity, through which Wearne leads us with a sure-footed deftness.

There are, nonetheless, unifying themes as well. One is a form of indigenous 'multinationalism' that engages with the nation-states and vested interests of the two continents on its own terms. Another is resistance, amplified by a more recent shift away from the limitations of mere survival towards the possibilities of revival.

Rigoberta Menchú, the youngest-ever winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, says in her foreword to the book: 'We are moving into the light of a new era for our peoples. We believe that our voices will make themselves heard, that you will listen to us.' The best possible way to keep that faith is to read this book.

Politics ☆☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆ DR

HOW INDIGENOUS Americans have been perceived by their oppressors is also an element in Alvin M Josephy's **500 Nations**, though his focus is mainly on North America. He details how, on a late December day in 1890, a small band of Minniconjou Sioux led by Chief Big Foot arrived at Wounded Knee in South Dakota. On their heels were US government forces intent on stamping out the banned 'Ghost Dance' religion. For the Sioux these dances, prayers and songs were a way of invoking dead ancestors and vanished buffalo herds. In the eyes of white government agents and soldiers, a group of indigenous people dancing looked like preparations for an uprising. That night Big Foot's band camped under the watch of the US Seventh Cavalry. The following day a random shot started a panic. Within a short time almost 250 Sioux had been massacred by the soldiers – and with them the final battle for freedom for the Indian nations died too.

Shirt worn by a Ghost Dancer. Many dancers believed the shirt would protect them from the whites' bullets.

With its eloquent text and over 450 lavish illustrations and photographs, this book is an ideal and stirring introduction to the hundreds of Native American nations that once blanketed the continent. It also pays homage to those who continue to survive, despite the problems of poverty, racism, alcoholism and high unemployment. In the words of Mario Gonzalez, an Oglala Sioux: 'Destiny is not a matter of fate. It's a matter of choice. And we have some choice of continuing to survive here on this planet as Indian people. That's our goal...'

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆ AH

music

Rumba Argelina

by **Radio Tarifa** *(World Circuit WCD 042)*

(One:)

by **Indigo** *(EMI Premier PRMDCD/TC12)*

MUCH HAS BEEN written about the way Spanish flamenco and North African music have infiltrated each other over the course of centuries. But rarely does an album demonstrate these links as vivaciously as Radio Tarifa's **Rumba Argelina**. Hailing from Tarifa in southernmost Spain – a crow's fly from Tangiers and close enough to North Africa to hear the *muezzin*'s call to prayer – Radio Tarifa is headed by Benjamin Escoriza, Vincent Molina and Fain S Duenas. Their music, although made up of easily identifiable elements, is quite unlike anything else. It's imaginary music: a music for a place and time that never was. Medieval-sounding cadences combine with haunting flutes, hammering flamenco beats and sombre violin lines. The Spanish-language songs are mainly traditionally based though removed as if to a parallel world by the group's touch. An astonishing range of instruments is used: medieval crumhorns, arab flutes, synthesizers, an Indian harmonium, accordions, saxes, guitars, rice-shakers and a terracotta pot.

Every available item, it seems, has been used to contribute to the precise textures – some delicate, some gruff – that make up **Rumba Argelina**. Escoriza's vocals are always direct and unruffled and there's a hint of the heroic about them.

There's music to suit every fantasist's mood: foot-stamping dance, some mysterious and plangent tunes with slinky zither sounds and – one of the best moments – a stately song of courtly love entitled 'Nu Alrest'. By taking up disparate elements to create a new voice, **Rumba Argelina** is a truly innovative and exciting album which comes highly recommended.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆☆

INDIGO'S DEBUT RELEASE **(One:)** is similarly hybrid in inspiration, although the results are very different. Producer and songwriter Kenny Young and Franco Lautieri have set the songs and chants of indigenous peoples to a music more easily recognized as the international club sound. Tuva, Inuit, Tibetans, Ogoni and others all get the dance remix treatment. The fact that sales of **(One:)** will financially benefit the tribes involved is the album's saving grace. It's just a pity that Indigo's social concerns do not translate into anything of much musical interest.

But if, by using their contacts with Western club audiences, Indigo can generate interest in the various folk musics then it will be an achievement of sorts.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆ LG

film

Fallen Angels

by **Wong Kar-wai**

At a time when the heart of the modern city beats to the rhythm of technology **Fallen Angels** comes to the screen as an extraordinarily powerful account of isolation and romantic disenchantment. It's a passionate study of human life and emotions in a world where faxes, mobile phones and video cameras have become everyday tools of artificial proximity and fast food is proof that time is yet another consumer product.

Set against a backdrop of contemporary Hong Kong, the film explores an internal world in which the main characters narrate their memories and desires and these become more important than their actions. Constantly seeking the past or the future, they are unable to engage with the present.

Director Wong Kar-wai evokes the old theme of love in a completely new way. It is no longer based on the romantic encounter – in fact the two partners in love almost never interact directly throughout the entire film. Sexual pleasure is not a shared experience but an act of masturbation. In their romantic frustration and search for completeness the characters navigate through a range of feelings and behaviours. There's the reflective woman who adores the objects of the man she longs for; and the demanding one, loudly asserting her rights over the phone to an uncaring lover. There's the nice guy who offers her his shoulder to cry on; and the gangster who kills with no apparent reason and is unable to commit himself emotionally

The characters are all young, part of Hong Kong's so-called 'Generation X'. Consumers of modern city culture, they are also paralyzed by it and reduced to a kind of political and moral passivity. But Wong Kar-wai is not preaching. Rather he is holding up a mirror to the state of things as they are, making us aware of what we are losing. Dramatically contemporary, **Fallen Angels** calls us to reflect on this world of simulacrum that takes us further and further away from any notion of reality and a modern culture that leaves us increasingly alone.

Politics ☆☆☆

Entertainment ☆☆☆☆ CR

STAR RATING

Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

Reviews by **Louise Gray, Alan Hughes, David Ransom** and **Catalina Ribalta**
Reviews editor: **Vanessa Baird**

THE CLASSIC

[Safe]

...being the film about the banality of peril.

A COUPLE DRIVES past the carefully sculpted facades of Los Angeles suburbia. It is night and everything seems to float in an eerie green light. Reaching home, the couple enter through their domestic security arrangements into a sleeping suburban pile. Next we see the woman's face, wiped-out, passive, fearful perhaps or confused. Above her, her husband's torso jerks in the rigours of marital sex. What is going on? Is this a film about gender clichés, or a critique of affluent *ennui*? Why is the woman's face ultimately so indecipherable?

As the film progresses we realize that the woman is Carol White, a suburban housewife, possibly bored, possibly misunderstood, but also suffering from a mysterious debilitating illness which she herself cannot define and which male doctors see as 'all in the mind'. The opening scene is already getting qualified: Carol is caught in a stereotypical gender role, but her lack of interest in sex is also the manifestation of her illness. Her fragile identity, marked mainly by externals such as aerobics and shopping, is also a factor. Such a multiplicity of meanings abound in almost every scene, and director Todd Haynes constantly trips up our expectations.

Julianne Moore's heroine facing multiple chemical sensitivity.

Julianne Moore's quiet, selfless portrayal of Carol is consistently amazing. There are no 'Dammit, I'm dying' histrionics. As we realize that Carol's illness is immune-deficiency related and is caused by multiple chemical sensitivity we begin to examine every detail in her environment – which could be our own – as potentially lethal.

Her illness is shored up by more general ills: her suburban isolation, her lack of purpose, her unfulfilled self. It's metaphoric meanings are numerous: it can be read as an AIDS metaphor, as a reflection of ecological collapse, as an emblem of political inertia and as an opportunity to forge a new self. 'It's the thing that kicks her out of unconsciousness, out of this unexamined life,' Haynes has said. It makes the viewer realize that identity is 'a fragile and basically an imaginary construct that we pretend to carry around. The more unexamined it is the more vulnerable you are.'

Eventually, Carol decides to join Wrenwood, an isolated healing centre where exposure to chemicals is minimized and the emphasis is placed on the self. The inspirational figure at Wrenwood is Peter Dunning (Peter Friedman) who has chemical sensitivity and is HIV-positive, but remains radiantly healthy. 'We are one with the power that created us,' he declares. 'We are *safe*, and all is well in our world.' But is it?

Carol seems to have substituted one kind of isolation for another. How can you fight something when you are in retreat from it? Why is dissent not taken seriously at Wrenwood? Why does Dunning live in a mansion removed from the retreat? Why is the strategy for healing based only on personal transformation and not on other therapies?

This section of the film bristles with ambiguities. The group-therapy sessions are both revealing and cringe-worthy. Wrenwood is a supportive environment yet it does not make Carol better. In opting for a ready-made 'solution', Carol has again given up her own initiative. Before Wrenwood, Carol had met up with a group of sufferers getting together to exchange information and make sense of their condition and mobilize for change. This was a group that did not have the answers but was fighting to find them.

Haynes has given a wider political reading to Wrenwood as being 'about the failure of the left; how it imploded into these notions of self and self-esteem and the ability to articulate and share emotions in the workplace or whatever. And it's such a loss because what was once a critical perspective looking out, hoping to change the culture, is turning inward and losing all its gumption and power.' It's this critique of passivity that chills the viewer with the force of its truth.

This is deliberately not a film about gay people (though Haynes is gay himself) or drug-users or people living near a nuclear plant. It is located in 'safe', impossible-to-ignore, 'normal' suburbia. Despite all its ambiguity and multiple layers of meaning, **[Safe]** finally offers a stark choice: in the face of environmental collapse – and by implication political and cultural failure– is one to wait for someone else to come up with an answer, or get involved in the search to find it? Now the reply to that one at least should be easy. ■

Urvi Patel

[Safe] is directed by Todd Haynes (US, 1995) and is available from Tartan Video, 79 Wardour St, London W1V 3TH. Tel: (171) 494 1400.

Curiosities

QUESTIONS THAT HAVE ALWAYS INTRIGUED YOU ABOUT THE WORLD WILL APPEAR IN THIS, YOUR SECTION, AND BE ANSWERED BY OTHER READERS. PLEASE ADDRESS YOUR ANSWERS AND QUESTIONS TO 'CURIOSITIES'.

Most alphabets have a similar order even where the script is different. For example, the Russian and Greek alphabets have a similar order to the Roman. Where did this order come from?

● The Greek, Russian and Roman alphabets are similar because they are close cousins. The Greeks learnt about alphabetic writing from the Phoenicians (we think) in the ninth century BC. The Etruscans in Italy took it from the Greeks around 800 BC, and the Romans from the Etruscans in the sixth century BC. The Russians took it from the Greek missionary St Cyril of Thessalonica in the ninth century AD.

All their alphabets were based on the Greek alphabet at the time. Modern differences arise firstly from gradual evolution and simplification. For example, the Greek 'sigma' with its bottom bar knocked off became 's' and the Greek 'gamma' turned on its side a little and became 'c'.

Each nation topped-and-tailed the Greek alphabet to suit the sounds of its own language. The Russians added new signs to stand for sounds which did not occur in Greek while in Western Europe the problem was handled by introducing pairs of letters like 'ch', 'sh' and 'th'.

Geoff Dawson
Narrabundah, Australia

● Similar orders and groupings occur in many widely separate cultures which suggests the order is not an arbitrary one.

Take the consonant 'm' for example. It is always found in or near the middle of these alphabets and holds this position with remarkable phonic stability.

Classical linguistics tends to look for derivational cause-and-effect type relationships between alphabets, whereas cutting-edge thinking is more in line with the non-locality concept which is causing such excitement in quantum physics.

Our approach to this question will anyway be directly related to our ideas about the origins of language itself.

I would welcome a dialogue with Robert Fletcher, the reader who asked this question.

Stephen Schaffhauser
London, England

AWAITING YOUR ANSWERS

What was the 'World Citizens Movement' and who was Gary Davis? Where can I read about them?

F Bowring
Sheffield, England

I have been looking for a UK-based car insurance company that offers some ethical content but have drawn a blank. Does anyone know of one?

Simeon Hope

Is the inter-tribal sign language of the Native North Americans completely extinct? Have there been any other cultures – apart from modern Western societies – that have developed a sign language?

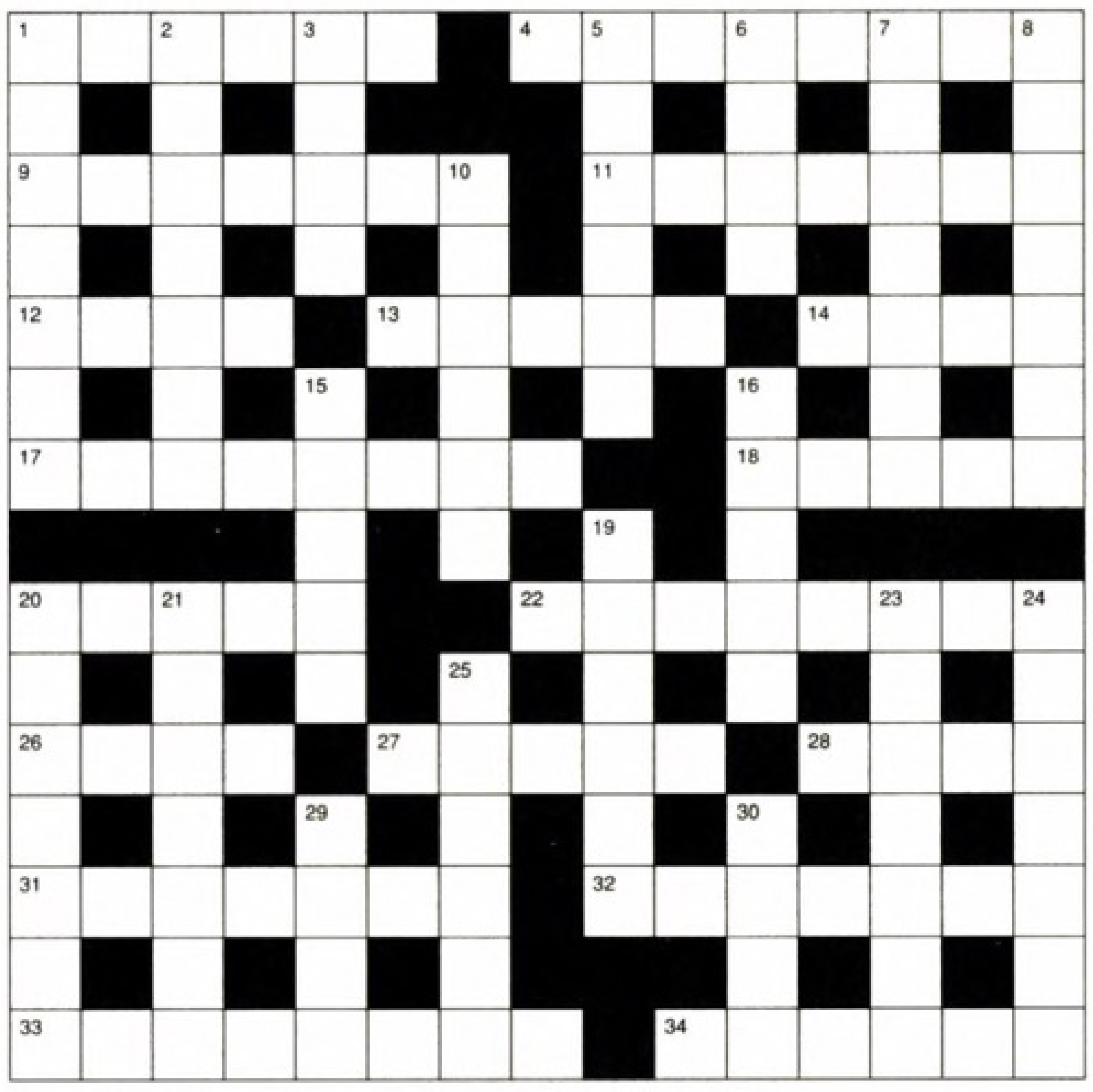
Ralph Scrimshire
Woodbridge, England

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR ANSWERS PLEASE SEND THEM TO **CURIOSITIES, NEW INTERNATIONALIST, 55 RECTORY ROAD, OXFORD OX4 1BW, UK,** OR TO YOUR LOCAL NI OFFICE (SEE INSIDE FRONT COVER FOR ADDRESSES).

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS SECTION ARE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF **NI**.

The NI Crossword

No. 6 by Axe



CRYPTIC

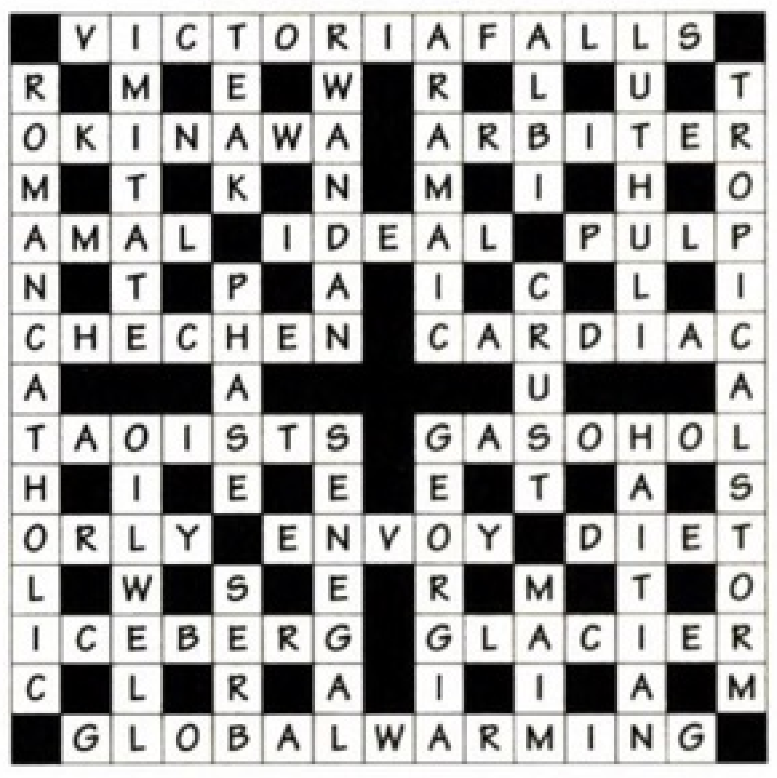
Across

- **1** Success – taking out a real return when following the leader (6)
- **4** Ring article at first, applying to area of land down south... (8)
- **9,11** ...where a watery end awaited this colourful soldier? (7,7)
- **12** Yield the whip-hand (4)
- **13** Tour about river mouth in Cornwall (5)
- **14** Element of the pursuant American company adhering to the letter at last (4)
- **17** Row back – with Chinese mob about – to the island (8)
- **18** Make a start with Israeli head – already late (5)
- **20, 19 (down)** It is said that Batman dogged the tennis player in the Lebanon (5,6)
- **22** He was sunk by Khrushchev – blown up on lake in merchant ship (8)
- **26** Important Asian hostelry (4)
- **27** French city to fabricate internal laws (5)
- **28** Sea mist concern... (4)
- **31** ...12 chaps in distress (7)
- **32** Metal used on edges of yacht and topless atrium (7)
- **33** They are 8, these first two anonymous slogan sets (8)
- **34** German city where pain is confined by sodium treatment (6)

Down

- **1** A torch I use for 12 (7)
- **2** 8 port from where expedition to oil was made (7)
- **3** White blemish contained when turning over the German flower (4)
- **5** Perhaps where the nurse is on duty, towards the front (6)
- **6** In Australia, sounds more like atmosphere than mere water... (4)
- **7** ...precipitating ruling by ear! (7)
- **8** Continent's character far removed from Inca form (7)
- **10** Witnessed the conflict above the capital (6)
- **15** Like going in and out of badly-laid tiles, to start with (5)
- **16** Prior home of Turkish governor has superior rating (5)
- **19** See 20 across
- **20** 'Boss' – aka 'dangerous 8 with imperial delusions'! (7)
- **21** See 29
- **23** Describing these tribespeople, they – it is said – have the heart of the French on food (7)
- **24** Without the East, developing Vietnam requires one important additive (7)
- **25** Plant revolutionary in no-return situation (6)
- **29,21** Saint, then king, breaking bread for republican ex-Prime Minister (4,7)
- **30** Upping the ante will make the Sicilian fume! (4)

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION



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O	K	I	N	A	W	A	■	A	R	B	I	T	E	R
M	■	T	■	K	■	N	■	M	■	I	■	H	■	O
A	M	A	L	■	I	D	E	A	L	■	P	U	L	P
N	■	T	■	P	■	A	■	I	■	C	■	L	■	I
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A	■	■	■	A	■	■	■	■	■	U	■	■	■	A
T	A	O	I	S	T	S	■	G	A	S	O	H	O	L
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O	R	L	Y	■	E	N	V	O	Y	■	D	I	E	T
L	■	W	■	S	■	E	■	R	■	M	■	T	■	O
I	C	E	B	E	R	G	■	G	L	A	C	I	E	R
C	■	L	■	R	■	A	■	I	■	I	■	A	■	M
■	G	L	O	B	A	L	W	A	R	M	I	N	G	■

QUICK

Across

- **1** Fascist son of a customs official (6)
- **4** Commonwealth country of the South Pacific (8)
- **9,11** Greenpeace's vessels (7,7)
- **12** Harvest or growth (4)
- **13** County town of Cornwall, England (5)
- **14** Metallic element, atomic number 30 (4)
- **17** Caribbean island, administratively combined with Tobago (8)
- **18** Likud Prime Minister of Israel, 1977-83 (5)
- **20, 19 (down)** Lebanese stronghold of Hezbollah in the early 1980s (5,6)
- **22** Stalin's short-lived successor (8)
- **26** Caravanserai, or medieval Chinese emperor (4)
- **27** French city where the world's first automatic subway service started in 1982 (5)
- **28** Worry, brood (4)
- **31** Plant of the goosefoot family, the leaves of which are eaten as a vegetable (7)
- **32** Silver-grey metallic element, symbol Y (7)
- **33** Inhabitants of country whose largest ethnic group is the Ovimbundu (8)
- **34** German border city – French Aix-la-Chapelle – birth place of Charlemagne (6)

Down

- **1** Ragout, or the bean that gives it its name (7)
- **2** Coastal city of Libya or Lebanon (7)
- **3** North Sea river which has its source in the Czech Republic (4)
- **5** Advancing or further on (6)
- **6** Largest lake in the Antipodes – at least in the wet season! (4)
- **7** Bestowing lavishly (7)
- **8** *The ________ Queen* – John Huston's 1951 classic (7)
- **10** European city, on the Vistula, where Marie Curie was born (6)
- **15** Descriptive of the rise and fall in sea level during the lunar cycle (5)
- **16** Convent or monastery (5)
- **19** See 20 across
- **20** President of Central African Republic, proclaimed himself emperor 1977 (7)
- **21** See 29
- **23** Culture of peoples living in the border country of Iran, Iraq and Turkey (7)
- **24** Organic compound, a nutritional supplement (7)
- **25** Organism comprising algae and fungi, sometimes moss-like in appearance (6)
- **29, 21** Labour Prime Minister of Australia 1991-96 (4,7)
- **30** Europe's highest volcano (4)

Hunger unpublished

How **Mark Axelrod** lined up some of the world's finest writers on one of the world's biggest issues – and still couldn't get them into print.

IN 1992, AS THE SUN SET on President Bush and rose on President Clinton (two sides of the same star), I had witnessed the situation in Somalia with both consternation and perplexity. Being a mere purveyor of words, I really had no idea of what I could do to help remedy that horror, or any other horror whose focus was hunger. But sitting on a sofa, watching the nightly news and feeling impotent to effect change is not the principle on which remedial action gets taken. What could I do that would get me off the couch and into the universal melée?

Eventually I came upon the idea of organizing and editing a collection of fiction, poetry and essays by writers from all over the world, using a publisher who would donate the profits to a foundation whose mission was to help remedy the burden of hunger. My goal was to interest writers who had either experienced or understood the debilitating effects of hunger and who could express that.

And so I set myself the task of writing to as many writers as I could to see if they would contribute. Over the course of four years I have written to over 200 of them and received positive responses from Martin Amis, Margaret Atwood, Christine Brooke-Rose, JM Coetzee, Maryse Condé, Ariel Dorfman, Raymond Federman, Eduardo Galeano, Allen Ginsberg, Günther Grass, Alasdair Gray, Lucía Guerra, Wilson Harris, Thomas Keneally, Maxine Hong Kington, Doris Lessing, Alejandro Morales, Giose Rimanelli, Márcio Souza, Wole Soyinka, Ben Stoltzfus, Ronald Sukenick, Luisa Valenzuela, Gerald Vizenor and Elie Wiezel.

There were a lot of missing writers – noble and Nobel Prize winners – who did not wish to participate. But I had a dozen or so of the world's finest writers, all of whom were committed to contributing prose or poetry of some kind. All I needed was a publisher whose interest in social responsibility was forthright and sincere.

I first contacted Grove Press, thinking that such a distinguished publisher of noble causes would surely be interested. And they were. For a time. Until the day came when they informed me that 'the collection would not make much money'. I didn't think that making a lot of money – at least for the publisher – was the point. But I was wrong. Profitability *was* the point. How naive. And in my naiveté I marveled at the loss of the *pro bono* spirit of publishing. No 'kinder, gentler' humanists there. I discovered bottom-line guys and dolls whose quest for the absolute seemed to hinge on a 'new' collection of *Aesop's Fables* or a redesigned cover of Tolstoy or Trollope. After all, those are all 'public domain' with no fees to pay.

Then I thought that, perhaps, Grove was an anomaly; perhaps the publisher of such distinguished humanists as Beckett and Pinget and Genet had somehow changed directions; perhaps when others discovered such a fine collection of writers they would be as enthusiastic as I was; perhaps Noonday would be interested. After all, they still publish Hamsun's *Hunger* which documents the horror, albeit in an artistic way. But that kind of hunger may be easier to publish. And it happened over a hundred years ago – late-nineteenth-century Norwegian hunger isn't *fin de siècle* American or Latin American or Rwandan hunger, and Hamsun won a Nobel Prize and... Well, you get the idea. In short, their answer was: 'This would not be suitable for our lists.' And, of course, 'list suitability' is of paramount importance in the publishing world.

I've continued to scour the Manhattan pavements for a publisher who might be interested in this collection, but it's been fruitless. Without naming names, just about every major publisher has repeated the same phrase to me: 'It won't turn in a profit.' This reminds me of the admonition I once received from a Hollywood producer that I shouldn't write any film script which had to do with American Indians since, well, Indians don't sell at the box office. And, apparently, hunger doesn't sell in the bookstores or on college campuses.

To say that I have been disappointed by the New York publishing 'community' is to say the very least. Perhaps the industry 'reflects' the balanced-budget-at-all-costs tenor, the disdain-for-social-responsibility tenor, the tenor of the times. Perhaps it's always been that way.

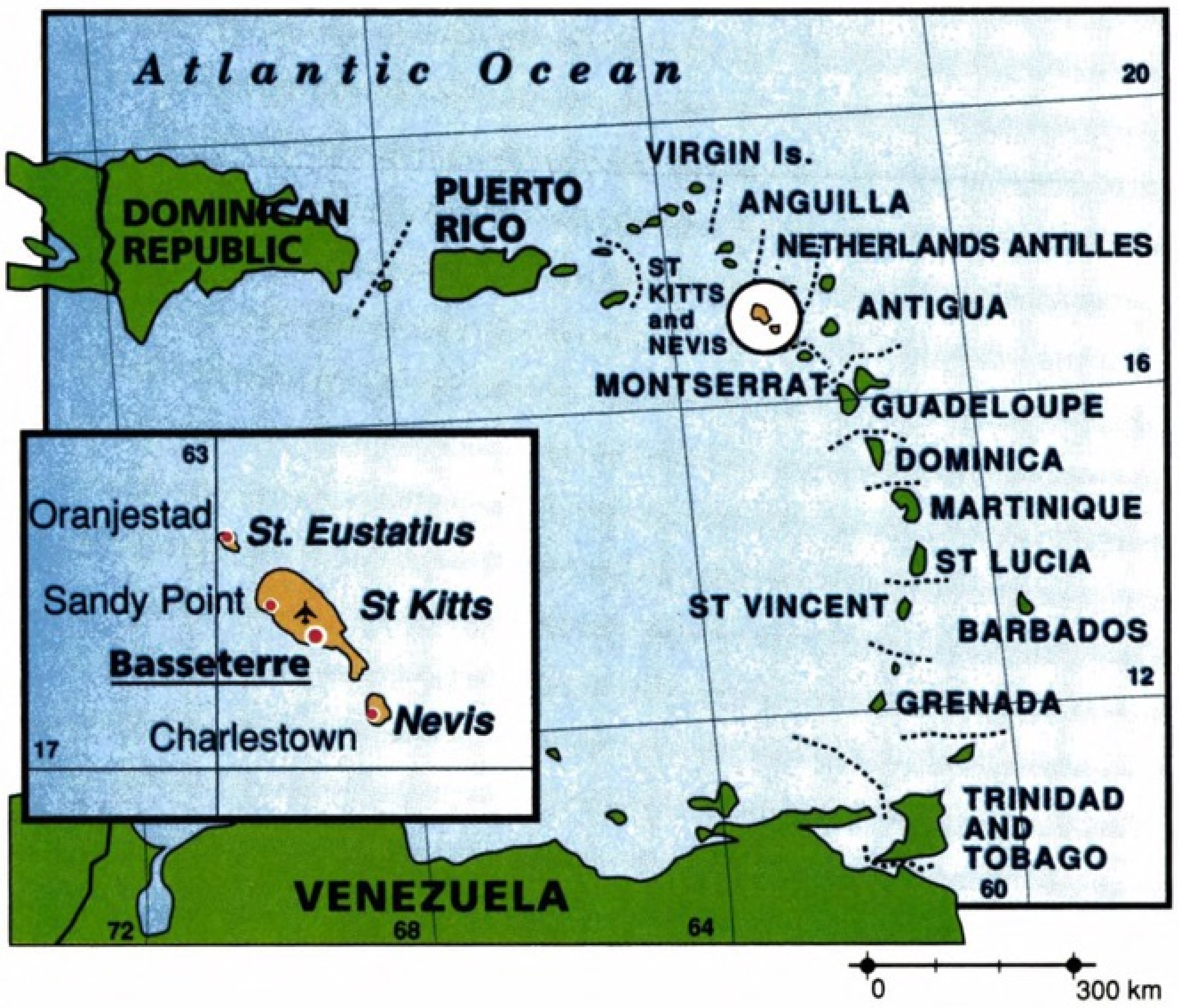
Some may think that such an anthology would be a pretty meagre attempt to rectify the notion that in a free-market economy 'some must eat and some must starve, depending on the vouchers one has'. But I felt certain that *somewhere* on the streets of Manhattan, *someone* other than someone who by Grand Central Station sits down to weep, would redefine the issue of the bottom line in terms of the human condition rather than capital gains. Needless to say, the relationship between profit and prophet goes beyond the homonym of spelling and I continue to search impatiently for an editor who can recognize the spirit of humanity. ■

Mark Axelrod is a writer based in Tustin, California.

Country profile

St Kitts and Nevis

BRIMSTONE FORTRESS on the west coast of St Kitts is an imposing monument to the inter-imperial rivalries which once raged around the sugar-rich islands of the eastern Caribbean. Built in the seventeenth century to fend off attacks from French forces, this so-called 'Gibraltar of the West Indies' was hewn out of volcanic rock and in its heyday housed a garrison of more than a thousand British troops. Its cannons still point out towards the Caribbean Sea, where on a clear day you can make out the distant volcanic shapes of St Eustatius, Saba and Montserrat.



The days of European warmongering are long gone. Brimstone Fortress was abandoned by the British in 1852, neglected for a century and then reconstructed in the 1980s as an attraction for upmarket 'heritage' tourists. Today the historic site welcomes the wealthy Europeans and North Americans who stay in St Kitts' luxuriously restored plantation-house hotels.

But if the cannons are now silent, the twin island state of St Kitts and Nevis is far from the peaceful idyll of the tourism brochures. Since independence from Britain in 1983, the country has been shaken by a series of constitutional crises, corruption scandals and violent crimes. Party politics are at best heated, at worst close to open warfare.

Like other small, poor islands in the region, St Kitts and Nevis became a convenient trans-shipment point in the 1980s for South American cocaine en route to the US. The extent of the drug-traffickers' influence was dramatically revealed in 1994 when the son of the Deputy Prime Minister was murdered, apparently by professional assassins. The head of the police enquiry was then himself gunned down, raising the spectre of direct involvement on the part of Colombian cocaine cartels. While narcotics experts from Scotland Yard have been called in, the two main parties – the St Kitts and Nevis Labour Party and the People's Action Movement – loudly accuse each other of drug-related corruption. Cruise-ship visitors, meanwhile, are openly hustled by dealers on the streets of Basseterre.

Perhaps even more serious is the prospect of the world's smallest nation-state splitting into even tinier parts. Only two miles of sea separate St Kitts (33,000 people) from Nevis (9,000 people), but animosities run deep. Nevisians complain that they were yoked together with Kittitians to make life easier for British colonial bureaucrats and many wanted to separate at the time of independence.

Since then relations have been strained, with Nevis complaining that St Kitts takes its taxes but spends very little on improving its services. A particular bone of contention is St Kitts' alleged insistence that Nevis-bound tourists pass through its airport, thereby raking off lucrative departure taxes. A commission is currently considering whether Nevis could viably secede from St Kitts, as did Anguilla back in the 1960s.

Political rows and high-profile murders are not what the islands' fledgling tourism industry needs. With its sugar industry in seemingly irreversible decline, St Kitts and Nevis depend overwhelmingly on foreign visitors for employment and dollars. Cocooned in their all-inclusive enclaves, the tourists may be largely oblivious to the troubles outside, but local tourism officials know that bad publicity can spell disaster for a would-be tropical paradise. ■

James Ferguson

AT A GLANCE

ABBIE ENOCK / CAMERA PRESS

Leader Prime Minister Denzil Douglas

Economy GNP per capita $4,410 (UK $18,060)

Monetary unit: Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC$1 = US$2.70)

Main exports: sugar, garments, data processing

Main imports: machinery, foodstuffs, oil

Tourism is now overtaking agriculture as the islands' economic mainstay, and the Government is investing heavily in a new cruise-ship terminal in Basseterre.

People 41,000

Health Infant mortality 33 per 1,000 live births (US 8 per 1,000). One of the eastern Caribbean's poorer states, St Kitts and Nevis has made progress in primary healthcare since independence.

Culture 95 per cent of Kittitians and Nevisians are of African descent and there is a small East Indian-descended community. Poverty and unemployment have traditionally forced many islanders to work abroad, and there are extensive links with the US and Britain as well as a vital remittance economy.

Religion: Christian, mostly Anglican and other Protestant denominations.

Language: English.

***Sources** The State of the World's Children 1996, UNICEF; Human Development Report 1995, UNDP; Caribbean Insight; Economist Intelligence Unit; Latin America Monitor; World Development Report 1995, World Bank.*

Never previously profiled

NI star rating

EXCELLENT	★★★★★
GOOD	★★★★
FAIR	★★★
POOR	★★
APPALLING	★

STAR RATINGS

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★
Unequal land ownership persists, and a small middle class monopolizes the retail and tourism sectors.

SELF-RELIANCE ★★★
The Government is trying to reduce dependence on imported food through diversification, but sugar still dominates the landscape.

POSITION OF WOMEN ★★
Women are under-represented in positions of power and largely confined to menial work in agriculture and tourism.

LITERACY ★★★★
90%. Governments have prioritized primary education, but resources are scarce and drop-out rates high.

FREEDOM ★★★
No apparent censorship or repression, but some complain that changes of government result in political victimization in the public sector.

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★
66 years – rising steadily with better primary healthcare (Canada 77 years).

POLITICS

NI ASSESSMENT ★★
A 'Westminster' model of two-party politics has yet to produce stability or continuity. Impartial observers claim that political patronage has undermined both of the main parties' democratic credibility, while tensions between St Kitts and Nevis threaten another constitutional crisis.

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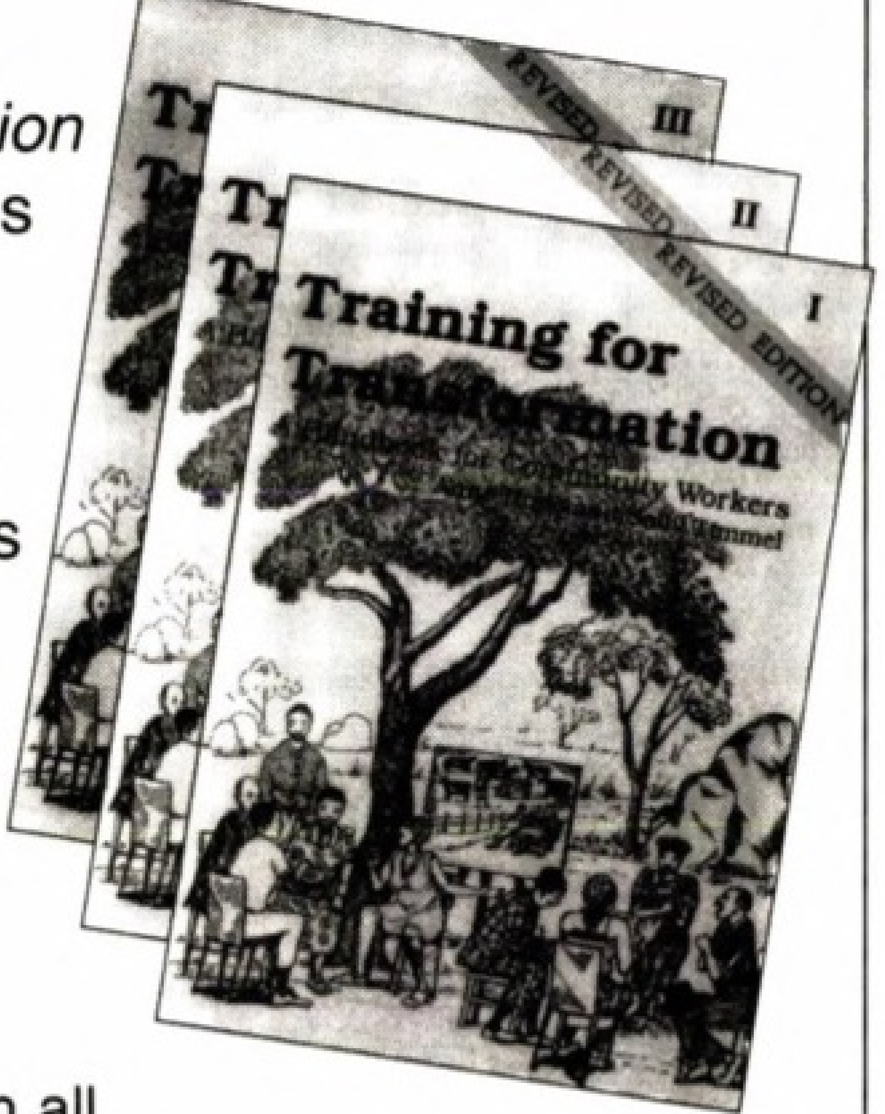

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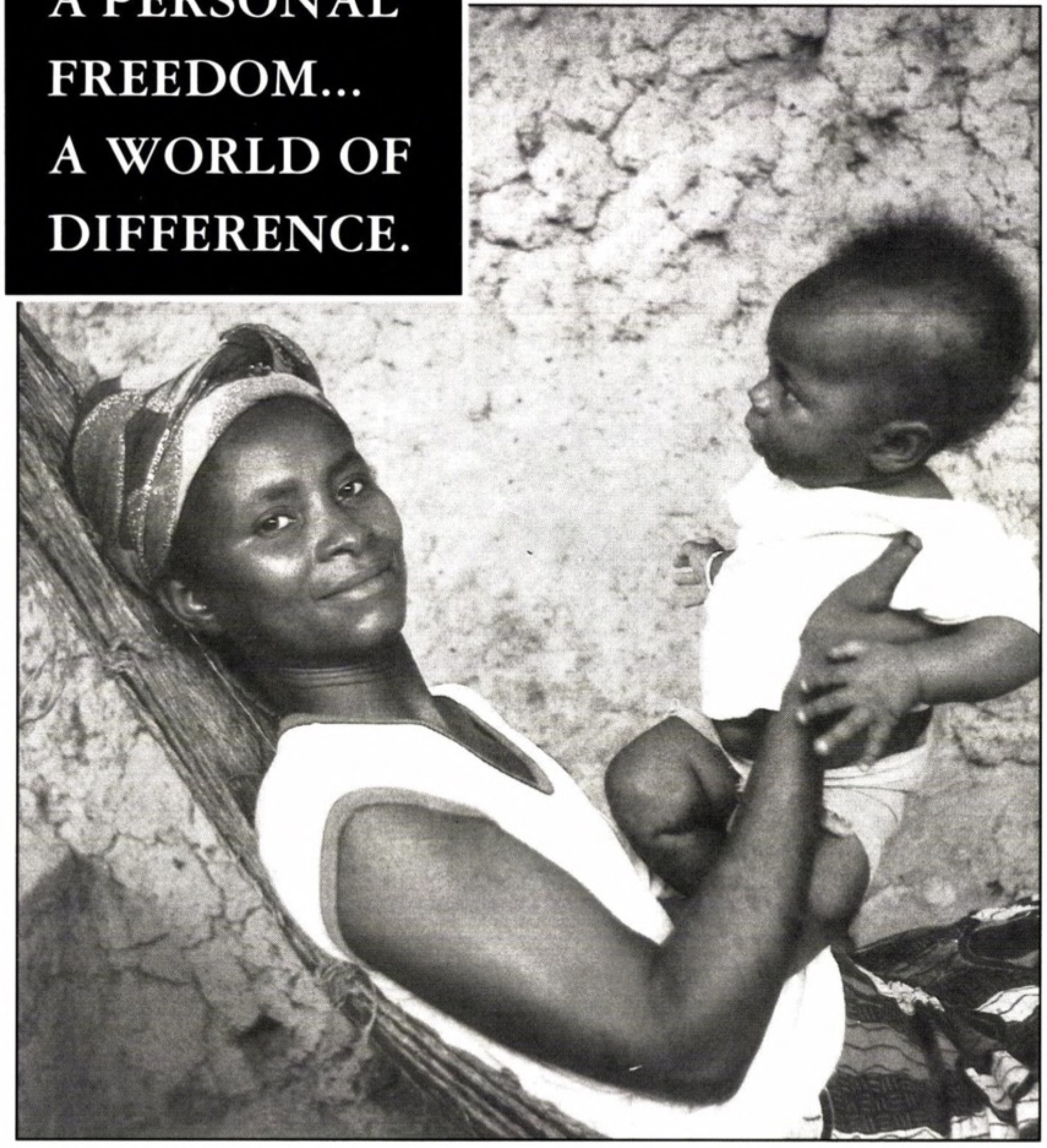

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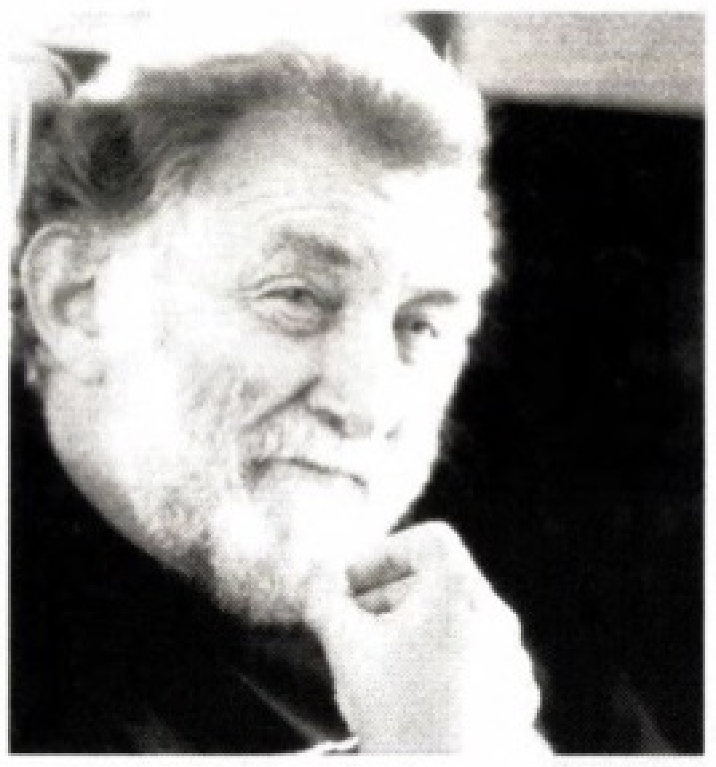

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January 1997
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One World Calendar
② The SPICES of Life
PIQUANT RECIPES FROM AFRICA, ASIA & LATIN AMERICA FOR WESTERN KITCHENS PLUS FOOD FACTS AND SPICE GUIDE
NEW
③
eye to eye
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